

**Turning Left:
Counter-Hegemonic Exhibition-Making
in the Post-Socialist Era (1989 – 2014)**

Volume I

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Turning Left: Counter-Hegemonic Exhibition-Making in the Post-Socialist Era (1989 – 2014)

This research examines how the practice of curating has been used to further counter-hegemonic agendas in public art institutions since 1989. The central aim is to provide a fuller, contextualised, and medium specific understanding of how the institutional exhibition might be used to challenge the hegemony of neoliberalism and the post-political consensus politics that sustains its dominance. It provides insights, through both historic case studies and reflective practice, that problematise the idea that the institutional art exhibition is a viable medium for counter-hegemonic critique, or represents the ideal space for the development of an agonistic public discourse.

This thesis presents collaborative research undertaken with Tate Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University. The research presented both extrapolated from, and contributed to, the development of an exhibition, co-curated with Tate Liverpool, entitled *Art Turning Left* (8 November 2013 – 2 February 2014) and a supplementary publication of the same name. The first section investigates how the idea that curators can counter neoliberal dominance, through institutional exhibition-making, developed. It draws from analyses of previous exhibitions, and the theory of Chantal Mouffe, in order to critically evaluate the curatorial application of counter-hegemonic critique and agonistic practice. It also provides a review of how exhibitions (held in major art institutions since 1989) have articulated politics, in order to determine their relationship to neoliberal dominance, and to identify significant gaps in the dialogue facilitated by these institutions. These analyses provide the theoretical and contextual grounding for the final two chapters, which provide a rationale and critical evaluation of my own attempt to develop an alternative counter-hegemonic curatorial strategy for the exhibition at Tate Liverpool. They document, and analyse, the areas of dissensus, and the ideological and pragmatic limitations that emerged, in trying to realise these theoretical propositions (in practice) in a public art museum. The thesis therefore provides a critical framework for the development of an alternative practice that positions the exhibition as a form of post-political critique and specifically targets the hegemonic role that institutional exhibitions play in reinforcing class distinctions and devaluing nonprofessional creativity.

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Introduction

One of the central concerns of curators since 1989 has been how they can empower publics to participate in civic discourse, engage with political debate and take an active role in the decisions that affect their lives. Since neoliberalism has become the dominant economic model, citizens have become increasingly removed from any meaningful participation in political life. The perception that there is little difference between what the major parties offer, has further alienated people from the democratic process.¹ This has been compounded by neoliberal ideologues who claim that there is 'no alternative' to liberalism.

Proponents of post-political critique argue that the kind of consensus politics operated by neoliberal states further disenfranchises people from civic life, as it positions politics as a rational, technocratic procedure administered by experts.² They argue that alternative public spaces need to be reclaimed for the enactment of more dissensual political discourse and critique. Because exhibitions articulate a discourse, which people can react to, or critique in the moment of encounter, they have been offered as a means to engage diverse publics in political thinking and debate. Buoyed by the affirmation and support of radical leftist philosophers, individual curators have, therefore, increasingly explored how their exhibition making practice can play a role in breaking up the hegemony of neoliberal consensus politics and open up different ways of doing politics.

Progressive, leftist curators, however, have faced a significant dilemma. Informed by the institutional critique of artists, sociologists and museologists, which elucidated

¹ As David Harvey describes, during this period, neoliberalism has also become a 'hegemonic mode of discourse...(and) has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world' David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, p.3.

² Post-political critique refers to a discourse of the political left, which focuses its criticism on the new types of political processes and practices that have emerged after 1989, associated with neoliberal thinking. The new form of global politics that has emerged is described by proponents of post-political critique as a 'post-ideological consensus'. It is characterised by the universal acceptance of the capitalist market and the liberal, democratic state as the organisational foundations of society and the related absence of overtly ideological discourse and debate. In the new 'post-ideological consensus politics', ideological values are deemphasised in favour of common-sense and pragmatism; conflict and dissensus are discouraged. The achievement of a rational consensus is positioned as *the* goal of political debate. Proponents of post-political critique, including the radical philosophers Jacques Rancière, Chantal Mouffe, Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, argue that the new practices and processes associated with neoliberal thinking reduce politics to a form of social and technocratic administration, carried out by experts in social and political administration. The new practices are held to foreclose the possibility of authentic political acts which are properly transformative and subvert the existing hegemony.

the role that art institutions play in reinforcing the status quo and furthering neoliberal ideology, two clear avenues emerged.³ They could desert the existing institutions and instead develop autonomous, grassroots curatorial practices removed from the institutional art world (as the autonomists advocate), or they could seek to reform or reinvent the established practices of the existing institutions from within (as post-Marxist, political theorist Chantal Mouffe advocates).⁴ The research presented in this thesis demonstrates that the majority of leftist curators, since the 1980s, opted for the latter approach and continued to work within the existing institutional frameworks. Indeed, the period since 1989 has witnessed the development of a myriad of new experimental approaches intended to ‘shake up’ the sedimented exhibition-making practices of the public art museums and major biennials, offer greater intellectual and political agency to the viewer, and foment political debate. However, there has been no in-depth critique of the new forms of practice that have emerged in relation to counter-hegemonic agendas. Nor has there been any interrogation of the argument that institutional art exhibitions can be used as a platform for radical democratic politics – or of the specific effects of such strategies on visitors. Thus, though the enactment of counter-hegemonic strategies has had a transformative effect on the form of many institutional exhibitions, the question remains as to whether such approaches are truly empowering for the viewer.

Though counter-hegemonic exhibition making may be appealingly experimental and intellectual for the curator, it presents a different set of challenges for the institution. Public art museums, like Tate, are caught and, somewhat trapped, between two seemingly incompatible demands. As state-funded institutions they are expected to be neutral, objective and rational, in the decisions they make – particularly with regards to politics. It is evident, for example, that Tate strives to

³ In the following chapter (Chapter One) I describe the work of several curators who describe their practice as progressive, and whose objectives can be defined as broadly leftist. These curators include Jorge Ribalta, Charles Esche, Catherine David, Okwui Enwezor, Marion von Osten, Nato Thompson, Carolyn Christov-Barkagiev and Maria Lind.

⁴ Autonomism refers to an anti-authoritarian tradition in Marxist thought that stresses the importance of worker’s being able to self-organise, define and struggle for their own interests, independent of state institutions or political parties. As a theoretical system it first emerged in Italy in the 1960s from the foundations of the Operaismo movement. Autonomists focus on self-organised action and activities, outside of traditional institutional structures, and everyday forms of resistance to capitalism. In terms of counter-hegemonic curatorial practice, autonomists would advocate (if applying the principles of autonomist theory) for the development of exhibition-making activities outside of the existing state-funded art institutions. Autonomist theorists include, Antonio Negri, Paul Virno and Mario Tronti. See: Georgy Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life*, AK Press, Oakland CA, 2006.

position their exhibitions as a neutral form of communication. The illusion of neutrality is reinforced by using the white cube format, through standardised wall texts that never offer a forthright opinion, a strategy of non-intervention with artists' work, and a rationalised selection process for inclusion and exclusion of works. However, in order to justify their funding, it is also expected that they should be 'innovative', 'contemporary' and 'entrepreneurial'; in other words, cutting edge. In this particular moment, this means that their programming should be theoretical, topical, subversive and political. This presents a challenge to the institution: how can it be seen to engage with politics without being perceived as propagandistic? This is particularly difficult because exhibitions tend to be presented as the speech act of the institution.

Post-Marxist theorist Chantal Mouffe has offered an influential framework by which curators can conceive of their institutional practice as counter-hegemonic.⁵ Mouffe articulates the main tenets of this framework — in terms of its opposition to the autonomist advocacy of withdrawal from the existing institutions — in an article for EIPCP (The European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies) entitled *Critique as Counter-Hegemonic Intervention* (April, 2008).⁶ Throughout this thesis I refer to this framework as 'counter-hegemonic critique from within' to make clear that Mouffe advocates for a form of counter-hegemonic critique that can be enacted from within the existing institutions. As I shall set out in the following chapter, her writing on the potential reinvention of the existing art institutions as centers for counter-hegemonic critique has been extremely influential in contemporary curatorial practice. It is based on a conceptualisation of the art institution as a unique public space, where a new form of radical agonistic politics (a politics which embraces antagonistic views) can be developed and experimented with. But can the established art institutions really accommodate antagonism or attract diverse

⁵ Chantal Mouffe is a leftist, Belgian, political theorist, currently based at Westminster University, whose work is associated with post-political critique. Her political philosophy has been influential across a variety of disciplines, including sociology, education, cultural studies, media studies, art, literary criticism, and curatorial studies. In collaboration with Ernesto Laclau she developed a highly influential form of discourse analysis, by combining Gramsci's focus on hegemony with post-structuralist theory. She has more recently focused on post-political critique, developing a concept of 'the political' that stresses the importance of antagonism, conflict and counter-hegemonic critique, to the development of a 'proper' functioning, radical pluralist democracy. Her work has become increasingly influential amongst contemporary curators. She has regularly spoken at conferences attached to art exhibitions and biennials, and contributed essays to exhibition publications. Her concepts are references widely in contemporary curatorial discourse. A detailed discussion of Mouffe's contribution to current debates in contemporary curatorial practice follows in Chapter One of this thesis.

⁶ See: Chantal Mouffe, *Critique as Counter-Hegemonic Intervention*, EIPCP (The European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies) (April, 2008). Available online here: <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0808/mouffe/en> (accessed 08/02/2013).

publics? Are the established art institutions an appropriate site for the development of radical political discourse and the enactment of counter-hegemonic critique? This thesis engages with these questions through a critical examination of previous counter-hegemonic exhibition projects and through the development, production and evaluation of an original counter-hegemonic project. It presents the findings of collaborative research undertaken with Tate Liverpool, which investigated the application of counter-capitalist and counter-hegemonic strategies in leftist art production and curatorial practice. There were three main outcomes of this research. The first two outcomes were an exhibition entitled *Art Turning Left: How Values Changed Making 1789-2013* (8 November 2013 – 2 February 2014) and an accompanying publication with the same name. The critical study presented in this thesis represents the third, and final, outcome.

The process of co-curating this exhibition provided the opportunity to research how artists have enacted counter-hegemonic strategies. However, more crucially, it enabled a critical evaluation of the idea that curators can help to destabilise the neoliberal hegemony by developing and enacting their own counter-hegemonic exhibition making practices, within the existing art institutions. I held a unique position operating both inside and outside of the institution, neither being an employee of the institution nor an external guest curator with a contractual obligation. This gave me more freedom than Tate curators would normally have, to question the way the institution usually did things and to challenge these practices – whilst offering an understanding of the structures and internal politics of the institution that might elude guest curators. Theoretically speaking, these were the ideal conditions to mount what Mouffe describes as a counter-hegemonic challenge. The central research questions that guided my curatorial process were therefore: What is the organising principle that can bring the art works together to articulate the impact that leftist values have had on the way that art is made, displayed and distributed? What curatorial strategies can I employ to counter neoliberal ideology and the post-political politics it foments in a state-funded art institution such as Tate Liverpool?

This thesis draws heavily upon Chantal Mouffe's framework of counter hegemonic critique from within. However, it also tests her advocacy of this idea, and her positioning of the public art institution as a space for the development of radical agonistic politics. I problematise these concepts through both historic exhibition case studies, and a critical reflection on my own attempt to employ counter-hegemonic strategies, at Tate Liverpool. I make the case for an alternative approach to counter-hegemonic curating from within, which strategically negates the idea of the exhibition as an objective, neutral medium. This study will thus intervene in the almost entirely affirmative discourse about counter-hegemonic curatorial practice articulated by radical leftist philosophers, and curators, in exhibition catalogues, curatorial anthologies, academic journals, art magazines, seminars and conferences.

Chapter One situates the exhibition in the theoretical and historical context of leftist curatorial practice. It examines how curators have responded to the dominance of neoliberal governance since 1989, and reviews the different types of counter-hegemonic curating that have emerged. The central contention is that there has been a marked 'turn to the left' in contemporary curating, which has, in turn, significantly influenced the form of exhibitions and the processes of exhibition making. I establish how, and why, the curator-led discourse has come to be dominated by radical leftist philosophy and, in particular, the idea that the curator can and *ought* to attempt to subvert the neoliberal hegemony. Mouffe's notion of 'counter-hegemonic critique from within' is identified as the idea that has had, by far, the most transformative influence on curatorial practice. However, an unfaithful reading of recent exhibitions of political art is used to demonstrate that the type of politics that is articulated in the exhibitions themselves, does not match the radical rhetoric evident in the curator-led discourse.

Chapter Two draws from four case studies, of counter-hegemonic exhibition making, to problematise the idea that the existing public art institutions are best placed to facilitate the furthering of leftist political agendas. It highlights the central challenges that emerge for the curator, and the limitations of the institutional exhibition form that restrict the development of counter-hegemonic critique. I use these case studies to further argue that the current trend of negating the authorial voice, and

disarticulating exhibition narratives to empower the viewer, is a mistaken approach. In focusing on authorial power and control, such strategies fail to tackle the most pressing ways in which public art institutions serve to reinforce class hierarchies. The contention here is that art institutions serve the neoliberal project by reinforcing class hierarchies and, thereby, naturalising the unequal distribution of capital in society. Moreover, the failure to facilitate the articulation of antagonistic political positions, in these exhibitions, has meant that they often replicate the same kind of post-political consensus-orientated discourse that the curators are attempting to challenge. Without taking on these issues directly, institutional art exhibitions cannot provide any meaningful challenge to the neoliberal hegemony, or hope to empower anyone other than the already powerful. The critique presented, in this chapter, lays the groundwork for the alternative counter-hegemonic strategies that I set out in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three provides the curatorial rationale for the exhibition at Tate Liverpool. It presents the reasoning behind my overall approach of reinventing the retrospective survey exhibition as a form of post-political critique. Chantal Mouffe's theory is drawn upon to argue for a concept that focuses on left/right politics, and an organising principle that allows conflicting positions to be brought into contact with each other. However, her lack of acknowledgement of the issue of social class is corrected in the development of an installation and interpretation strategy that aims to demystify art, and situate it as a production process with much in common with other forms of labour.

Chapter Four extrapolates from my experience of co-curating *Art Turning Left*, to provide an in-depth critical evaluation of 'counter-hegemonic critique from within'. It examines how the strategies defined in Chapter Three were put into practice, identifying any blocks, challenges or tensions that emerged. This chapter also appraises how far the final exhibition fulfilled my counter-hegemonic objectives of countering the de-ideologisation of politics, demystifying the production of art and constituting more critical, questioning viewing subjects. The purpose of these final two chapters is to counter the unproblematic acceptance of counter-hegemonic and counter-capitalist curating in the curator-led discourse. They do this by revealing the

limitations of the subversive agency of the guest curator, the communicatory power of the exhibition medium and the radicality of public art institutions.

This research cuts across the disciplines of art history, museology, geopolitics, radical leftist philosophy, and the relatively new fields of exhibition histories and curatorial studies. There has been an abundance of recent publications that address contemporary curatorial practice. These, typically, fall into four categories. Firstly, anthologies that present different views on a given theme or specific element of curatorial practice, by collating individually authored articles or interviews with curators and academics (Paul O'Neill *Curating Subjects*, 2007; Elena Filipovic, *The Biennial Reader*, 2010).⁷ Secondly, books designed to provide an overview of the development of, or recent trends in, contemporary curatorial practice (Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*, 2013).⁸ Thirdly, exhibition histories, which offer a series of case studies of historically significant exhibitions (Jens Hoffmann, *Show Time: The 50 Most Influential Exhibitions of Contemporary Art*, 2014; Bruce Altshuler, *Salon to Biennial*, 2008).⁹ And finally, biographical studies of an individual's curatorial practice (Hans-Joachim Müller, *Harald Szeemann: The Exhibition Maker*, 2006).¹⁰

There is, thus, a distinct absence of in-depth critical interrogation, in relation to emerging forms of curatorial practice. The understandable drive to, first, establish the history of exhibition making, and to cement the intellectual status of curators as producers, as well as presenters of knowledge, has meant that there is often a lack of criticality in the field. Though the curator-led discourse consistently engages with political questions, radical leftist philosophy, and geopolitical critique, there have been very few articles that specifically address curating as a political practice – let alone focusing on counter-hegemonic exhibition-making. Moreover, these accounts are too affirmative, too piecemeal, and too embedded in the institutional art world to provide any meaningful critical analysis of the counter-hegemonic potential of institutional exhibition making.

⁷ Paul O'Neill (ed.), *Curating Subjects*, Open Editions and De Appel; London & Amsterdam, 2007 and Elena Filipovic et al. (eds.) *The Biennial Reader*, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern, 2010

⁸ Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*, Independent Curators International, New York, 2012

⁹ Jens Hoffmann, *Show Time: The 50 Most Influential Exhibitions of Contemporary Art*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2014 and Bruce Altshuler, *Salon to Biennial: Exhibitions that Made Art History, Volume 1 (1863-1959)*, Phaidon, London and New York, 2008.

¹⁰ Hans-Joachim Müller, *Harald Szeemann: The Exhibition Maker*, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2006.

The two notable exceptions to this general rule are artist and curator, Jorge Ribalta's analysis of MACBA's experiments with 'New Institutionality' between 2000 and 2008, and curatorial collective What, Why and for Whom?'s (WHW) catalogue essay, *This is the 11th Istanbul International Biennial Curators' Text*, for their own counter-hegemonic exhibition *What keeps Mankind Alive?*¹¹ This research seeks to build upon these isolated critical case studies by offering an overarching, contextual and theoretical framework for the analysis of counter-hegemonic curatorial practice that draws primarily on Chantal Mouffe's theory. Although there have been several critical studies of Chantal Mouffe's theory in relation to politics and education, there has been no critical evaluation of how her work has been applied to contemporary exhibition making.¹² This is the case despite evidence that the curatorial application of her theoretical positions has resulted in considerable transformations to exhibition forms and institutional practices. Grounded in discourse theory, her concepts, have, however unintentionally, heralded a shift towards so-called discursive exhibition making and para-curatorial practice that negate the visual and spatial properties of the exhibition medium. This research provides a much-needed critical perspective, through which I aim to assert the importance of a realistic, medium-specific understanding of the counter-hegemonic potential of the institutional art exhibition.

My research locates the politics of art and exhibition making primarily in the processes of production. It is now accepted that the exhibition is a medium in itself, rather than simply a vehicle for making another medium (art) public. However, extant texts, almost uniformly, fail to adequately address the specificity of this medium. The curator-led discourse positions exhibition making as an intellectual and creative practice, which converts the theoretical and political proposition of a curator into an exhibition form. Most texts describe and, often, help to reaffirm the idea of the curator as an auteur with a comparable remit, and communicative authority, to that of the author of a book, essay or article – or the director of a film

¹¹ Jorge Ribalta, 'Experiments in a New Institutionality' in Jorge Ribalta and Manuel Borja-Villel (eds.), *Relational Objects: MACBA Collection 2002-2007*, MACBA Publications, Barcelona, 2010 and What, How and for Whom?, 'This is the 11th Istanbul International Biennial Curators' Text' in What, How and for Whom? (eds.), *What Keeps Mankind Alive? The Texts: 11th Istanbul International Biennial*, Yapi Kredi Publications (Turkey), 2009 p. 101.

¹² See for example: John S. Brady, 'No Contest? Assessing the Agonistic Critiques of Jurgen Habermas's Theory of Public Sphere.' in *Philosophy Social Criticism*, May 2004 vol. 30 no. 3, pp. 331-354 or Thomas Fossen, 'Agonistic Critiques of Liberalism: Perfection and Emancipation', *Contemporary Political Theory*, No.7, pp. 376-394.

or theatre production. The vast majority of these texts are written by curators who, themselves, have a professional agenda to reaffirm the intellectual status of what they do. It is perhaps unsurprising, that it is rarely questioned how far it is actually possible to communicate complex theoretical positions through — what this thesis will argue — is a very limited, compromised and contaminated medium. This thesis argues that the consistent analogies between exhibition making and other communicative media are unhelpful; that the exhibition should only be rationalised and critiqued within its own specific typology or genre. Although this may seem an obvious and overly pedantic point to make, it is important; as the constant comparison to other communicative media unrealistically raise curators, critics and audiences' expectations of what an exhibition can; and should, deliver. Most importantly, it impacts on the way in which they are conceptualised, made and presented.

1. Transformations in Curatorial Practice under Neoliberalism and their Impact on Exhibition Form

The year 1989 was a critical landmark in the history of leftist politics: it saw the fall of the Berlin wall, the official end of the cold war, and the beginning of the end of the Communist Eastern Bloc with the execution of Nicola Ceaușescu in Romania.¹ That same year, Francis Fukuyama (who had already proclaimed the universal triumph of neoliberal capitalism) declared liberal democracy as the only viable system in which all contradictions and conflicts can be rationally resolved, and announced the end of left-right politics.² 1989, however, also marked the beginning of a period of more critical, reflexive and 'political' curating in public art museums and the exponentially increasing number of international biennials. The publication of *The New Museology* (1989), edited by Peter Vergo, heralded a period of critical examination for public art institutions.³ Scholars such as Tony Bennett, Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach exposed how the different forms of liberal ideology (from classic, to embedded, to neo-liberalism) underpinned the political rationality of public art museums.⁴ Courses in curatorial studies began to emerge and, along with them, a new critical curator-led discourse that linked the concerns of curators to wider geo-political theory. A new cohort of curators, armed with the most up to date radical philosophy, came out of these courses and began to ask how they could loosen the stranglehold of neoliberal ideology. Indeed, scanning the pages of any recent curatorial anthology, it is soon apparent that neoliberalism has become the progressive curator's chief adversary.⁵

¹ For an overview of the various revolutions across Europe that led to the collapse of the Soviet Bloc see: Jacques Lévesque, *The Enigma of 1989: The USSR and the Liberation of Eastern Europe*. University of California Press, 1997.

² In this extremely influential text he argued that the end of the cold war also marked the end of the progress of mankind's ideological evolution and the end of history as a struggle between competing political ideologies. He declared Western free-market capitalism, neoliberal economics and liberal democracy as the final triumphant form: 'What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such.... That is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government'. This quote first appeared in the essay 'The End of History', first published in *The National Interest* before being revived in his book 'The End of History and the Last Man'. See: Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History?', *The National Interest*, 16, Summer 1989, pp. 3-18 and *The End of History and the Last Man*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1992.

³ Peter Vergo (ed.), *The New Museology*, Reaktion, London, 1989.

⁴ Tony Bennett and Carol Duncan have shown, for example, how the adoption of a scientific and rationalised method for the display of art work was initially intended to neutralise the effect of religious imagery and thus play a part in the conversion of the people from Christianity to liberal democratic ideology by transforming the way the public looked at these paintings and by creating an appropriate critical distance from which to disinterestedly learn from and judge art. See: Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995 and Carol Duncan, *Civilising Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*, Routledge, London, 1995.

⁵ See, for example, the curatorial anthology *Curating Subjects* edited by Paul O'Neill. In this anthology there are numerous examples to back up my assertion. Liam Gillick, justifying his involvement in the multiple exhibition project *Utopia Station*, describes the present neoliberal hegemony as a time when 'the worst predictions from the recent past are playing out' and 'quasi-rationalist neoliberal thinking' as 'binary, unsophisticated and potentially deadly' (p.131); Dave Beech and Mark Hutchinson consider how curators might resist neoliberal capitalism by developing a radical practice, arguing that there is a need for an 'anti-curation' to 'infect art with social context' (p.62); whereas Simon Sheikh never uses the term 'neoliberalism' but refers to it as 'the

Counter-hegemonic rhetoric is now so commonplace that the idea that the curator *is* opposed to neo-liberalism, and *ought* to use their practice to challenge the neoliberal hegemony, is presented as a *fait accompli*. Radical leftist philosophy, anti-capitalist and anti-neoliberal rhetoric now dominate the curator-led discourse in new specialist print journals, online publications and conferences.⁶ 1989 is, thus, the starting point for this analysis, as it was the year in which a newly emerging curator-led critical discourse intersected with the consolidation of neo-liberalism as the dominant global political discourse.

This 'left turn' is one of the most striking transformations in a historically conservative profession tied to the preservation of order; however, it has passed largely without comment. Despite the prevalence of counter-hegemonic rhetoric, the impact that radical leftist philosophy has had on the ways in which curators and art institutions rationalise and do their work has not been documented or critically analysed in an academic study. The few existing academic studies that address the political and ideological function of art exhibitions have concentrated on revealing how they have been strategically produced in order to maintain the hegemony of embedded liberalism.⁷ The same critical historicisation has not been afforded to the counter-hegemonic, leftist exhibition – making that I describe here.⁸ It remains unclear, for example, whether curators are now genuinely more left leaning. Do leftist curators simply dominate the discourse? Or are curators simply seeking to validate their

dominant imaginary of society' and offers the art exhibition as one means of producing new subjectivities and 'counter-publics' capable of opening up new possibilities (p.182-83). Paul O'Neill (ed.), *Curating Subjects*, Open Editions and De Appel, London & Amsterdam, 2007.

⁶ Prior to the 1989 there was no international curator-led discourse or platform through which curators could reflect critically on their practice and engage in theory coming out of other disciplines. Most curators had either studied art history as students, or entered the profession from other fields and learned 'on the job'. However, in the background to the sweeping political and cultural changes that resulted from the end of the Cold War, the first postgraduate curating courses were formed, and stimulated the development of a critical academic discourse to discuss exhibition-making within. This in turn led to the development of more discursive platforms such as curatorial anthologies, symposia and conferences, which focused on exhibition-making as a creative mode of production.

⁷ Staniszewski, for example, examines the ideological underpinning of several key exhibitions at MoMA, New York to elucidate the importance of exhibition installation in maintaining the liberal democratic hegemony. See: Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*. MIT Press, Cambridge, 1998

⁸ This is not because this type of practice did not exist prior to 1989 – the legacy of leftist counter-hegemonic exhibition-making predates the starting date of this study by over a century – but because until 1989 it has been almost exclusively the domain of artists and object-centric art historians had generally neglected the importance of display and dissemination within politicised artistic practice. Courbet's 'Pavillon du Réalisme', for example, served as a counter-exhibition to the Paris World Exhibition of 1855, by showcasing artworks rejected from the show in a nearby tent and the Surrealists joined forces with French Communist Party to produce the exhibition *The Truth About the Colonies*, which aimed to articulate the specific anti-colonialist political position of the Anti-Imperial League by providing a counter-narrative to the International Colonial Exhibition, in Paris in 1931. A more recent example is *Towards Another Picture* (Nottingham Castle, 1977-78) curated by Andrew Brighton and Lynda Morris, which included 'low art' (wildlife art and traditional paintings of steam trains) alongside high and contemporary 'art world art' in a deliberately political strategy aimed at undermining the hegemonic role of high art and its institutions. See: Neil Charles Mulholland, *Why is there only one Monopolies Commission? : British art and its critics in the late 1970s*, 1998, PhD thesis, Glasgow University, p. 137 <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/2532/1/1998mulhollandphd.pdf> accessed 29.10.2013.

intellectual status by linking their practice to any fashionable political theory, which, at present, just happens to be leftist? I contend that it is essential to contextualise this development, to establish how, and why, radical leftist philosophy has come to exert such an influence over curatorial practice, and to interrogate the rationalisation and effectiveness of the application of such theory in curatorial practice. The analysis that follows provides a historical context and theoretical framework for the critical analysis of exhibition case studies in Chapter 2, and the development of an effective counter-hegemonic strategy for the exhibition at Tate Liverpool, in Chapter 3. It is of wider importance to contemporary curatorial practice because, as I shall demonstrate, the new practices and forms of exhibition-making that have emerged have transcended their counter-hegemonic underpinnings and become, in themselves, standard ways of doing and making.

This chapter reviews the ways in which leftist curators responded to neoliberal governance and ideology, after 1989, and aims to establish how their responses impacted on the form and content of exhibitions. I ask: what theoretical positions did curators align themselves with? How did they shift their curatorial and institutional practices in relation to these positions? And how did they reconcile the role of public art institutions in maintaining the neoliberal hegemony with their counter-hegemonic agenda? This chapter also examines the issues, tensions or debates that have emerged as a result of changes in practice made by curators in relation to their anti-neoliberal agenda. I contend that attempts to put post-Marxist positions into practice, by reconfiguring the art institution as a space for dissensus and political debate, have endangered the craft of exhibition making: its very visual and spatial construction is in danger of being subsumed and superseded by pure discursivity, if the current trajectory is followed through to conclusion. The task of this research is therefore to establish how the institutional exhibition can function as counter-hegemonic critique without relinquishing the most unique, engaging, affecting and potentially mobilising attributes of the medium.

I further problematise the positioning of institutional exhibitions as counter-hegemonic critique by conducting an 'unfaithful' reading of the articulation of politics in displays that engage with political art, themes and concepts. I argue that an important tension

has emerged between a curator-led discourse that is anxious to continually assert its radical political credentials, and the notable and resolute refusal to articulate a clear leftist position, employ the terms 'left' and 'right', or even acknowledge the existence of a partisan left/right politics in the discursive framework of the exhibition itself.⁹ In bringing this contradiction to the fore I hope to raise an issue in contemporary leftist exhibition-making that will need to be addressed, if individual attempts at counter-hegemonic curating have any hope of being articulated together as an effective challenge to neoliberal dominance. Chapter Two builds upon these findings through in-depth analyses of five exhibitions. I use the issues raised in these chapters to rationalise the formation of a more effective counter-hegemonic proposal for the exhibition at Tate Liverpool, which embraces the visual and spatial properties of the exhibition medium.

1.1 The intersection of radical leftist politics and curatorial practice

At the beginning of the nineties the climate of fear and repression that characterised the Cold War period was seemingly over. The Iron Curtain lifted to create new opportunities for cultural and political exchange. This heralded a search for unity and commonalities amongst artists, and a drive to present a singular universal aesthetic. *Les Magiciens de la Terre* (Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, and Grand Halle de la Villette, Paris, 1989), for example, aimed to integrate the practice of Asian, African and Latin American artists with those of Western conceptual artists.¹⁰ The new spirit of unity helped left-leaning curators to address the Western hegemony of culture, through a number of broad survey shows that addressed post-colonial and identity politics, and attempted to incorporate marginalised artists and notions of 'otherness' into the mainstream arena.¹¹ Important examples include: *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Postwar Britain* (Hayward Gallery, 1990), which stressed the similarities between the experiences and practices of artists of different diasporas, and

⁹ By curator-led discourse I am referring to the collective discourse articulated through journal articles, books on curating, art magazine articles, exhibition catalogues and public programme events. By 'discursive framework' I am referring to the texts within the exhibition space itself, which includes the title, the wall texts and work labels and the specific texts penned directly by the curator or institution including the press release, website texts, exhibition catalogue introductions and so on.

¹⁰ The exhibition has since been heavily criticised for suggesting that artists from outside traditional western centres were only engaged in spiritualism, magic and superstition rather than intellectual concerns. See Bruce Althusser, *Biennials and Beyond: Exhibitions that Made History, 1962-2002*, Phaidon Press, London, 2013.

¹¹ This process of challenging Western hegemony of major exhibition-making had already been started by the Havana Biennial, founded in 1984. The second edition became an important precursor for new biennials across the globe. It not only brought together artists from outside the traditional centres but also actively engaged in the anti-imperialist rhetoric and postcolonial politics as a subject and thematic.

The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s (Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, New Museum of Contemporary Art, and Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, 1990), which was amongst the first to incorporate work from outside the Western mainstream alongside Western artists.¹²

It was also now practically possible and ideologically acceptable to show the work of artists from former Eastern Bloc countries. Hence, there was a concerted effort by curators to introduce Eastern and Central European art into Western art institutions and to create exhibitions that would serve a conciliatory role, enabling a new cultural relationship between East and West. *Manifesta*, for example, was established as a nomadic European Biennial of Contemporary art, in order to create a new cultural and political dialogue between young artists and curators from the East and West, with each edition to be held in a different European city outside of the major art centres. The inaugural edition was held in 1996, in Rotterdam, and focused on issue of migration and nomadic identity within Europe.¹³ These exhibitions tended towards creating a vision of a united Europe, where East and West share common values.

During the nineties the counter-hegemonic strategies of curators tended to focus on the micro-political – addressing issues of marginality, visibility and censorship, within the art world-and correcting the exclusion of certain social groups and forms of art. However, the advent of the new Millennium prompted critical reflection upon the contemporary political landscape. This made clear that neoliberal capitalism hadn't delivered on its promise to make everyone better off – it had just enabled the rich to get richer. Moreover, the events of September 11th 2001 brought home the fact that, even under the almost complete hegemony of neoliberal democracy, not all conflict could be rationally resolved. Yet, the increasingly technocratic orientation of parliamentary politics, under neoliberalism, meant that there was no credible platform

¹² The 1993 Whitney Biennial, which specifically focussed on political artwork produced by marginalised and under-represented artists, was also a ground-breaking exhibition in this regard. Not only was it one of the first such biennials to take on a unifying theme, rather than broadly survey recent trend in contemporary art, but this theme was centred on the politics of representation and identity. The organisers attempted to include a much larger proportion of artists from ethnic minorities than ever had been included in a major Western group exhibition before. For a review of the biennial see: Roberta Smith, 'At the Whitney, A Biennial with a Social Conscience', *New York Times*, 5th March 1993. See: <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/03/05/arts/at-the-whitney-a-biennial-with-a-social-conscience.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> accessed 10/05/13.

¹³ For more on the history of *Manifesta* see: Barbara Vanderlinden and Elena Filipovic (eds.), *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials in Post-Wall Europe*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass, 2006.

to mount an ideological critique.¹⁴ Leftist curators thus attempted to reconfigure the art institutions as spaces for engagement with politics and, more specifically, counter-hegemonic critique. They moved the emphasis away from the identity and representation-based micro-politics, of the institutional art world, towards a new joined-up, macro-political curatorial practice. In doing so, they sought to actively challenge the wider social injustice of neoliberal politics.

The strength of the drive to develop a counter-hegemonic model for art institutions is reflected in Charles Esche's contention that 'the most pertinent question for a European art institution today is not 'what art to show' but 'what kind of politics to stand behind'.¹⁵ According to curator and critical commentator Paul O'Neill, geopolitical critique was initially confined to the textual spaces of the curator-led discourse, which were either separate from or orbiting the exhibition, such as the accompanying catalogue or symposia. However, curators soon began to experiment with extending the parameters of the exhibition form to incorporate more 'discursive, conversational and geo-political discussion, centered within the ambit of the exhibition'.¹⁶

The consolidation of the art biennial as an experimental and progressive exhibition format further enabled the development of a macro-political and counter-hegemonic curatorial practice. The move away from the system of national representation towards thematic models of organisation in these exhibitions, after 1989, facilitated the new engagement with geopolitics. Although the Biennial form is routinely characterised as an instrumentalist neoliberal tool for the marketing of cities, it was, in fact, the relative autonomy of these institutions that led curators to conceptualise exhibitions as spaces where a more public, and less technocratic, critical and political discussion could take place.¹⁷ Indeed, the contemporary alignment of leftist politics and curatorial practice

¹⁴ Paul O'Neill, 'The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse', in Elena Filipovic et al. (eds.) *The Biennial Reader*, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern, 2010, pp. 240-259.

¹⁵ Charles Esche, 'The Deviant Art Institution' in *Performing the Institutional*, Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon, 2010. Available online at: http://www.academia.edu/2583026/The_Deviant_Art_Institution accessed 04.09.2015.

¹⁶ *ibid* p.240.

¹⁷ The biennial is identified with neoliberal values and practices because they tend to homogenise art in a neoliberal vision of a unified global culture dictated by Western liberal values; because through their contemporaneity they replicate the neoliberal desire for the continuously 'new'; and because through their facilitation of transnational, temporary and flexible networks they replicate the mechanisms and structures of global capitalism under neoliberal governance. See: Oliver Marchant, 'Hegemonic Shifts and the Politics of Biennialization' in *The Biennial Reader*, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern, 2010, pp. 466-490. For more on the relationship between biennials and neoliberal economics see: Carlos Basualdo 'The Unstable Institution' in Paul O'Neill (ed.), *Curating Subjects*,

has been chiefly driven by a small group of leftist curators, openly opposed to neoliberalism (including Catherine David, Okwui Enwezor and Charles Esche). These curators sought to channel the vast financial, spatial, and creative resources, proffered by the biennial model, into the production of an event that could reach beyond the confines of the art world and activate a critical discourse that would have much wider political and social resonance. The concept of hegemony was central to this alignment, as it linked the immediate concerns of leftist curators about the role that public art institutions play in sustaining neoliberal dominance, with the wider transformative agenda of radical leftist philosophers. These curators developed a new typology of exhibition – the exhibition as political analysis – that enabled a more reciprocal relationship between radical leftist philosophers and curators. This was primarily evident in the talks, texts and exhibitions of biennials since the late nineties.¹⁸ This new exhibition trope was to eventually cross over into the mainstream art museums, with exhibitions such as *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, (ZKM Museum of Contemporary Art, 2005) and *Populism: Artists Reflect This Contemporary Political and Cultural Phenomenon* (2005).¹⁹

Documenta X and XI (Kassel, 1997 and 2002) were watershed moments in the creation of new exchange platforms that could align the counter-hegemonic agendas of radical leftist philosophers with curatorial practice.²⁰ Catherine David, curator of *Documenta X*, aimed to produce new political discourses by transforming the exhibition into a medium for interdisciplinary geo-political analysis. The exhibition itself functioned,

Open Editions and De Appel; London & Amsterdam, 2007 and Elena Filipovic, 'The Global White Cube', in *The Biennial Reader*, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern, 2010, pp. 322-345.

¹⁸ Although during the 1980s philosophers were occasionally invited to curate exhibitions by major institutions, perhaps most famously Jean-François Lyotard's 1985 exhibition 'Les Immatériaux' at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, this kind of interplay between the curatorial and philosophical spheres could not be considered a two-way dialogue as it is now.

¹⁹ The exhibition *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, held at ZKM Museum of Contemporary Art in 2005 and curated by Peter Weibel, the Director of ZKM and sociologist, Bruno Latour, aimed to renew politics by applying artistic and scientific perspectives to it. The exhibition was organised as a multi-disciplinary research project, which functioned neither as an art exhibition in the traditional sense or a museum display of political history, but instead as a 'Gedanken-Austellung' (Thought-Exhibition), an, 'assembly of assemblies'. See: *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, ZKM Museum for Contemporary Art, March 20, 2005 - October 3, 2005, Curatorial managers: Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel

[http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/stories/storyReader\\$4581](http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/stories/storyReader$4581) accessed 09.11.2010. The exhibition *Populism*, curated by: Lars Bang Larsen, Cristina Ricupero and Nicolaus Schafhausen took place across four European cities: The Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius (April 8 through June 4 2005), National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, (April 15 through September 2, 2005), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (April 29 through August 28, 2005) and Frankfurter Kunstverein, (May 10 through September 4, 2005). It explored the relationships between contemporary art and current populist cultural and political trends. The reader featured texts by Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau, Brian Holmes and other leftist political theorists. See more at: <http://www.stedelijk.nl/en/exhibitions/populism> and Lars Bang Larsen, Cristina Ricupero, Nicholas Schafhausen, The Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art, *The Populism Reader*, Lukas & Sternberg, New York 2005,

²⁰ Oliver Marchant describes these two editions of *Documenta* as not so much functioning politically, in the sense that they did not actively engage in political conflict or struggle, but rather as being analytical in relation to politics, 'seeing themselves as instruments of cognition, or as cognitive weapons, rather than as directly political'. See: Oliver Marchant, 'Hegemonic Shifts and the Politics of Biennialization' in *The Biennial Reader*, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern, 2010, pp. 466-490.

essentially, as a historic survey exhibition of radical leftist art production, which paved the way for several other survey shows of leftist art at public art institutions, including: *Protest and Survive* (Whitechapel, London, 2000) and *Forms of Resistance: Artists and the Desire for Social Change 1871 to the Present* (Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, 2008). However, this was only one part of the event, intended merely to provide the historical context for an unprecedentedly extensive series of talks (*100 Days, 100 Guests*) and a pioneering anthology of critical texts, where leftist philosophers such as Étienne Balibar, David Harvey, Jacques Rancière and a posthumous Antonio Gramsci were brought together with curators to critically reflect on the position of culture in the globalised world.²¹ Thus, although David produced an art exhibition following the standard *Documenta* format, she molded the show to her political convictions – which were, undoubtedly, leftist – to ‘a degree that had not been anticipated by other curators and art historians’.²²

Okwui Enwezor continued David’s radical leftist project at, *Documenta XI*, by expanding the geographic and temporal boundaries, of the event, to create a further four critical platforms that took place over an eighteen-month period, in different cities across the globe, including St Lucia, Lagos and New Delhi.²³ He was more explicit about his counter-hegemonic agenda, setting themes (limitations of democracy, post-colonialism and the documentary as a critical form) to unite artists and leftist philosophers in a transformative discourse that could, as he phrased it, open up ‘other articulations’ that can reach ‘beyond the ideology of neoliberalism and capitalism’.²⁴ In *Platform 1: Democracy Unrealized* (an international symposium held in Vienna from March 15 – April 23 2001), this was made particularly clear when radical leftist philosophers – most notably Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri – were brought together to discuss the limitations of the existing democracy, and to challenge the ‘endist’ and ‘no alternative’ vision of politics, painted by neoliberal ideologues.²⁵

²¹ Catherine David and Jean-François Chevrier (eds.), *Politics - Poetics: documenta X - the book*, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern, 1997.

²² Almost universally criticised at the time as being an exercise in ‘left-wing nostalgia’ that was outdated and irrelevant to both contemporary art and politics, it was later dramatically reassessed as heralding a new dawn of politicised and critical art and hailed as ‘remarkably prescient’. See Miyoshi, Masao, ‘Radical Art at documenta X’, *New Left Review* 1/228, March-April 1998 and Gail Day, *Dialectical Passions: Negation in Postwar Art Theory*, Columbia University Press, 2011, p.23.

²³ For a detailed rationale of all five platforms see Okwui Enwezor’s essay in the catalogue for Platform 5: Okwui Enwezor, ‘The Black Box’ in *Documenta 11_ Platform 5: Exhibition*, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2002 pp. 42-55.

²⁴ For the full interview with Okwui Enwezor by Carolee Thea see: Carolee Thea, *On Curating: Interviews with Ten International Curators*, Distributed Art Publishers Inc., New York, 2009 p.50-57. For the specific quote see: p.50.

²⁵ Enwezor’s rationale for the project as part of a wider reassessment and critical analysis of ‘the ideological hegemony of democracy’ and the ‘neoliberal globalist onslaught’ can be found online here: www.documenta12.de/archiv/d11/data/english/platform1/text-berlin.html (accessed 06.06.2011).

These exhibition-events offered the structures through which curatorial practice could align with radical leftist philosophy, concerning the domination of capitalism in contemporary society and the de-ideologisation of politics.²⁶

The subsequent integration of radical, leftist philosophers into the discursive events programmed around exhibitions was gradually normalised. Leftist philosophers, including Slavoj Žižek Jacques Rancière, and most consistently, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, appeared in person at events programmed in art institutions, contributed essays to exhibition publications, and offered critiques of exhibitions.²⁷ Before 1989, the gathering of the leading figures of the Italian hard left Autonomia Operaia movement at Tate Britain, might have led to accusations of political impartiality, at best, and fears that British arts organisations were about to mount some kind of Communist *putsch*, at worst. Yet, in the 2008 Tate's hosting of Antonio Negri, Maurice Lazaretto and Bifo, for a conference on 'Immaterial Labour and the Dematerialisation of Art', simply signified that the institution was, if a little belatedly, 'on trend'.²⁸ The common aim of these philosophers was to nurture spaces in which a radical democratic politics of dissensus could take place. They were affirmative about the potential of curatorial practice as a form of resistance, and typically advocated the exhibition as a potential space where political conflict could unfold. It also became increasingly common for curators to use the key concepts of radical leftist philosophers as the basis for their themes and organising principles. The 10th Istanbul Biennial, for example, was entitled *Not Only Possible But Also Necessary: Optimism In the Age of Global War*, after a phrase in Hardt and Negri's influential text *Empire*.

²⁶Chantal Mouffe, for example, contributed a text to the publication which resulted from *Platform 1: Democracy Unrealized* called 'For an Agonistic Public Sphere' which exposed her model for a new radical democracy to a wider art world audience for the first time. Hardt and Negri also contributed a text called 'Globalisation and Democracy'. See: Okwui Enwezor, Markus Müller, Angelika Nollert and Christian Rattemeyer (eds.), *Documenta 11 Platform 1: Democracy Unrealized*, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2002.

²⁷ Examples of philosophers critiquing exhibitions include Jacques Rancière's *Malaise dans l'esthétique* (first published in English as *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*) in which he offers his perspective on *Bruit de Fond*, (Centre National de la Photographie, Paris), *Let's Entertain*, (Walker art Centre, Minneapolis, and Centre Pompidou, Paris) and *Voilà, le Monde dans la tête* (Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris), all three organised in 2000 and Chantal Mouffe's analysis of the Seville Biennial curated by Okwui Enwezor, that she presented at the 2nd Moscow Biennial. See: Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistic public spaces: Democratic politics and the Dynamics of Passions*, 2nd Moscow Biennial, 2007. Accessible online: 2nd.moscowbiennale.ru/en/mouffe_report_en/ (accessed 06.05.2012) and Jacques Rancière, translated by Steven Corcoran, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, Polity, Cambridge, 2011. The articles and conference appearances are far too numerous to detail here but examples will be made throughout this chapter.

²⁸ Art and Immaterial Labour Conference, Tate Britain, Jan 19, 2008. A report of the conference by John Cunningham entitled *Art Stripped Bare by Autonomists, Even*, (5th February 2008) and links to audio files can be accessed online here: <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/art-stripped-bare-post-autonomists-even> accessed 12.11.2010 A further detailed critical review written by David Graber, entitled *The Sadness of Post-Workerism*, can be accessed here: <http://libcom.org/library/sadness-post-workerism> (both accessed 06.05.2012).

Although both David's and Enwezor's reasons for inviting philosophers reflected their political commitment, the casual employment of radical leftist theory, by other curators, could be viewed as a means of cementing their status as intellectual producers of meaning.²⁹ Similarly, the philosophers' uncritical promotion of curators, as key players in the counter-hegemonic struggle, should not be accepted at face value. The philosopher gets cultural capital from his or her relationship with the art world, which can, in turn, legitimise their theory by providing a creative cultural application and perhaps, more cynically, lead to increased book sales. Furthermore, it could be argued that leftist curators have turned to philosophers, as their concepts provide a buffer that protects the curator from having to claim political positions for themselves. They allow them to present explicitly leftist theory as a neutral presentation of relevant ideas, rather than as a direct personal political agenda.

1.2 The leftist curator versus the art institution

The core debate that has emerged in the curator-led discourse, since the turn of the millennium, concerns how curators should position themselves in relation to the institution. Curators have played a key role in a consciousness-raising project, which continuously reinforces the fact that the major art institutions still retain many of the explicit and implicit functions, framework conditions, display conventions, rules of conduct and modes of address that were specifically designed to further the ideology of bourgeois and embedded liberalism.³⁰ Moreover, there is a profound consensus that, in spite of the effort major art institutions have made in response to critique from Pierre Bourdieu and others, they play a significant role in furthering the neoliberal class project, which cannot be changed without a much more fundamental transformation to their standard practices of exhibition-making.³¹ Curator and critic Simon Sheikh

²⁹ As Maja and Reuben Fowkes have rather cynically asserted: 'Ultimately it is the curators who are responsible for inviting the philosophers to the party. The role of curators has shifted in the last two decades from that of exhibition facilitator or administrator, to the more commanding position of an independent author. This enhanced position brings with it the power to ransack philosophy in search of intellectual models to serve as the conceptual grounding for their productions'. Maja and Reuben Fowkes, *How Philosophers get Curated*, Art Monthly, January 2009.

³⁰ Taking ownership and control of the critique of their own profession enabled leftist curators to use these uncomfortable revelations to force the art institutions to open up to more experimental and politicised practices and to further their own counter-hegemonic and counter-capitalist political agendas.

³¹ Some critics have argued that art museums can no longer be seen as excluding certain social classes or demographics in the way that Bourdieu's study had demonstrated. However, as Allan Wallach points out, although it may appear from the rise in audience figures that art institutions are becoming more democratic they are actually just attracting more of the same class of people. See: Alan Wallach, 'Class Rites in the Age of the Blockbuster' in *High-Pop: Making Culture into Popular Entertainment*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2002. This idea can be backed up, though it rarely is, by evidence drawn from sociological research. So, for example, an audience survey of US museums published in the 1990s resulted in very similar data to Bourdieu's famous study, *The Love of Art*, and led to the same conclusions that the biggest determiners in American cultural participation in art are educational level and class positions. This was also the conclusion of Tony Bennett et al. when they reapplied Bourdieu's mode of analysis to twenty-first

argued, for example, that the art institution's historic focus on constituting a public comprised of the ideal 'bourgeois subject of reason' is still behind the 'plethora of strategies and responses we see in contemporary exhibition-making'.³²

Awareness of the hegemonic role of public art institutions created a dilemma for leftist curators, who had hitherto imagined themselves providing a progressive and egalitarian public service. It forced them to reconsider whom they worked with and how they worked with them. Mai Abu's analysis of the process of conceptualising the unrealised 'art school' project for *Manifesta 6*, for example, makes clear that this issue is continually discussed and debated by leftist curators. She describes the team's unease around their attempt to develop a counter-hegemonic and politically engaged practice, within the framework of an existing institution. She states:

One question comes up again and again: Can you claim you are anti-institutional, and yet work for one of the pillars of the system? A little hypocritical perhaps? And here we can try to slip in some innocence: 'You can only change the system from within—participate and have your say, and gradually you can have some impact.' Or, 'The system is all-powerful, all-engulfing, and there is no room to maneuver.'³³

Here is the crux of the debate: whether to operate from within institutions, in the hope of changing them; or to abandon them as a lost cause.

Charles Esche has long wrestled with this question. In his article *Deviant Institution*, for example, he expressed his interest in using existing art institutions as a means of talking to different communities about alternative politics and opening up the idea that there is a possibility of a different future with a 'radically different value system than

century Britain, in order to ascertain if his findings were still applicable in contemporary times. See: Mark Davidson Schuster, *The Audience for American Art Museums, National Endowment for the Arts*, Research Division Report 23, Washington DC, Seven Locks Press, 1991 p.5, p19, pp.23-26. The report is accessible online at <http://arts.gov/sites/default/files/NEA-Research-Report-23.pdf> (accessed 15.08.2014) and Tony Bennett (et al.), *Culture, Class distinction*, Routledge, London, 2009

³² Simon Sheikh, 'Constitutive Effects: The Techniques of the Curator', *Curating Subjects*, Open Editions/De Appel, London, 2011, pp. 178-179. Further examples include Carolyn Christov-Barkiev's frequently elusions to Tony Bennett's Foucauldian analysis of the exhibitionary complex, which argued that art institutions continue to play a disciplinary role in society through cultural self-regulation and the tacit formation of social conventions by controlling behaviour in the exhibition space. See, for example, 'A Twist of Paradox: Interview with Carolyn Christov-Barkagiev', in 'The Political Potential of Curating', *On Curating*, Issue 4, 2010 pp.11-12, accessible online at http://www.on-curating.org/files/oc/dateverwaltung/old%20issues/ONCURATING_Issue4.pdf (accessed 28.06.13).

³³ Mai Abu ElDahab, 'On How to Fall With Grace – Or Fall Flat on Your Face', p.3 in *Notes for an Art School*, Manifesta 6 School Books, 2006. Available to download online: <http://manifesta.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/NotesForAnArtSchool.pdf> (accessed 21.08.2014).

the one offered by consumer culture'.³⁴ However, Esche rightly asserts that the existing art institutions, despite their efforts to reach and accommodate new publics, have generally failed to speak to, and be heard by, anyone other than the usual art world audiences. The problem when conceiving of the institution, as a means of challenging the neoliberal hegemony and capitalist value systems, is that the institution is likely to be preaching to the converted; to what Esche describes as, 'the audience least likely to be transformed by an artwork, because it already has a rather strict view of what art can do in the world'.³⁵

Two strands of radical leftist philosophy have significantly influenced the two conflicting positions on institutional reform. The first position, which I shall refer to as 'Exodus' – influenced by proponents of autonomist, post-Operaist and post-anarchist theory – proclaims that the existing art institutions, as repressive instruments of the neoliberal machine, should be bypassed, resisted and ignored. Post-Marxist theory and New Institutionalism influence the second position, which I call 'counter-hegemony from within'. It sees the major art institutions as the most appropriate sites from which to engage in a counter-hegemonic struggle, precisely because they are so implicated in the furthering of neoliberal hegemony. The influence of these opposing positions is evident throughout the curator-led discourse including, for example, in conversations between the critical commentator Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt and curator Maria Lind, in the online journal *On Curating*.³⁶ Gordon-Nesbitt has frequently highlighted the complicity of all art institutions with neo-liberal practices, arguing that to operate an effective critique it is necessary to withdraw from the existing art institutions and develop alternative forms of self-organised exhibition-making.³⁷ Lind, on the other hand, makes the case for a continued counter-hegemonic engagement with institutions. She aligns herself with the political theory of New Institutionalism in an interview with Paul O'Neill:

I don't think the institution itself, per se, is suspicious. I think you can do a lot of

³⁴ Charles Esche, 'The Deviant Art Institution' in *Performing the Institutional*, Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon, 2010. Available online at: http://www.academia.edu/2583026/The_Deviant_Art_Institution (accessed 04.09.2015) p.15.

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ See: 'Going Beyond Display – The Munich Kunstverein years: Maria Lind in an interview with Paul O'Neill (pp. 39-42) and Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt "False Economies: Time to Take Stock" in 'Curating Critique', (pp.32-38) both in *On Curating*, Issue 9, 2011. Accessible on-line at <http://www.on-curating.org/index.php/issue-9.html#VKmeVCcxD8M> (accessed 28.06.13).

³⁷ Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt's multi-faceted critique of the institutions of art centres on their duplicitous exploitation of cultural workers and adoption of neoliberal models of deregulated labour for the production and mediation of exhibitions.

good things with the institution. I am inclined to agree with Roberto Mangebeira Unger... He argues that in both the neo-liberal societies and the social democratic societies the institutions are in crisis in general, but that we shouldn't give them up, we should reinvent them from the inside.³⁸

Lind argues that the existing art institutions *can* provide a challenge to the 'consensus culture' of neoliberalism, by radically reconfiguring them from the inside and by changing as many of, what she describes as, the 'business as usual' standard hegemonic practices as possible.³⁹

1.3 Exodus: Desert and Do it Yourself

The concept of Exodus was originally put forward by Italian Autonomist, Paul Virno. As Virno explains, 'I use the term Exodus to define mass defection from the State, the alliance between general intellect and political Action, and a movement toward the public sphere of Intellect'.⁴⁰ 'Exodus' is a model of political action that consists of a withdrawal from the existing public institutions, in order to develop intellectualism and activism outside of official institutions and paid work. For Virno, a successful challenge to neoliberal capitalism would require the development of a new public sphere comprised of minority positions.⁴¹ The idea of 'exodus' is also central to Hardt and Negri's vision of *Empire*. They argue that in the globalised world there is no real centre of power to challenge, so the emancipatory struggle must exist in the everyday and the everyplace.⁴² Thus, the multitude is capable of self-organising to create a 'counter-Empire' that redirects the practices and modes of organisation of the postmodern world towards different non-capitalist ends to create an 'absolute democracy'.⁴³

³⁸ See: 'Going Beyond Display – The Munich Kunstverein years: Maria Lind in an interview with Paul O'Neill, in *On Curating*, Issue 9, 2011. Accessible on-line at <http://www.on-curating.org/index.php/issue-9.html#.VKmeVCcxD8M> pp.40-41

³⁹ Jens Hoffman and Maria Lind, *To Show or Not To Show*, Mousse Magazine, Issue 31, 2009. Accessible online at <http://moussmagazine.it/articolo.mm?id=759> (accessed 28.06.13).

⁴⁰ Virno further states: 'Exodus is the foundation of a Republic. The very idea of "republic," however, requires a taking leave of State judicature: if Republic, then no longer State. The political action of the Exodus consists, therefore, in an engaged withdrawal. Only those who open a way of exit for themselves can do the founding; but, by the opposite token, only those who do the founding will succeed in finding the parting of the waters by which they will be able to leave Egypt'. See: Paul Virno, 'Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus' in Paul Virno and Michael Hardt (eds.) *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1996 p.196

⁴¹ He calls this the 'Republic of the Multitude'. *Ibid*.

⁴² In their now famous text 'Empire' Hardt and Negri conceptualised the contemporary world order as being led by a new global form of power called 'Empire' which supersedes the stage of imperialism, has no territorial centre of power, no fixed boundaries and progressively incorporates the entire global realm with open, expanding frontiers. The object of rule is every single aspect of social life and power is exercised by a new 'society of control', which works directly through the social field to organise the brains and bodies "towards a state of autonomous alienation from the sense of life and desire for creativity" where workers, whilst no longer being passive victims, have instead become active actors of their own precarisation. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge and London, 2000 p.23.

⁴³ The term 'multitude' is employed by Hardt and Negri to refer to the new collective worker who, has through the global labour struggle challenged the old systems of exploitation and control brought about new modes of work that are primarily immaterial and intellectual, and thus helped to create 'Empire'. *Ibid*.

Marxist philosopher John Holloway's *How to Change the World Without Taking Power* and *Crack Capitalism*, similarly locates the site of resistance in the everyday.⁴⁴ These theorists position the state-funded art institutions as sites of neoliberal power, which should be bypassed by curators in order to take up the real, more essential struggle in the realm of the everyday. However, as Holloway asserted at a recent conference on DIY practices, a leftist curatorial practice, capable of genuinely challenging the neoliberal hegemony, would not emanate from defected professional curators still bound to the hegemonic practices of the institutional art world but, rather, from self-organised exhibitions and project-making by artists, political activists, or, indeed, any member of the community, outside of those spaces and frameworks.⁴⁵

The types of self-organised exhibition-making practices, described here, existed long before Virno's idea of 'Exodus' emerged, but have tended to fall under the radar of art or exhibition histories, precisely because they have actively resisted institutionalisation and professionalism.⁴⁶ One example is the explicitly left-wing collective PAD/D, which was initiated by Lucy Lippard in the 1980s.⁴⁷ This collective sought to develop alternative distribution systems, by linking possible exhibition spaces with activist, labour and community organisations to create 'an entirely separate left-wing sphere of culture'.⁴⁸ The over-riding counter-institutional objective was to build 'an international grass roots network of artists/activists who will support, with their talents and their political energies, the liberation and self-determination of all disenfranchised people'.⁴⁹ This approach – particularly its aim of establishing a worldwide network, or, indeed, a

⁴⁴ See: John Holloway, *How to Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today*, Pluto Press, London, 2002 and John Holloway, *Crack Capitalism*, Pluto Press, London, 2010.

⁴⁵ Holloway spoke at a symposium entitled *Just Do(ing) It: Artist-led and Self-organised Cultural Activity as Resistance to Capitalism* organised as part of the RadicalAesthetics – RadicalArt research group, Loughborough University (*Just Do(ing) It: Artist-led and self-organised cultural activity as resistance to Capitalism*, 14th May, 2011, S1 Artspace, Sheffield). He argued that a politically effective leftist curatorial practice would emanate from the self-organised exhibition-making characteristic of the DIY arts movements and specifically not from professional curators bound to the hegemonic practice of the institutional art world. This kind of practice would include independent curatorial projects located outside of institutional spaces that have a direct, site-specific and immediate local political objective.

⁴⁶ The majority of the creative practitioners who most faithfully carry out the kind of work outlined above are not discussed or given a voice in the curator-led discourse precisely because they are strategically refusing to work within the institutional art world and they are deliberately not professional curators. *The New Political Action*, curated by Michael Dupuis in 2006 for rhizome.org, for example, aimed to resist the co-option of political activism by institutions through a curatorial practice enacted via the decentred and deterritorialised world wide web. See: *The New Political Action*, curated By Michael Dupuis in 2006 for rhizome.org <http://rhizome.org/artbase/exhibitions/view/355/> (accessed 13/03/13).

⁴⁷ She put out an open call for DIY archivists to create an archive of political arts practice, which soon developed into an actively producing organisation in itself that programmed events, actions and curatorial projects.

⁴⁸ Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter*, Pluto Press, London, 2011, p. 25

⁴⁹ PAD/D, 1st Issue, New York City, February 1981, quoted in Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter*, Pluto Press, London, 2011, p. 25

counter-Empire –was, thus, precisely the kind of practice that Hardt, Negri and Virno would later advocate.⁵⁰

More contemporaneous examples would include exhibitions such as *Deep Breaths* (Govanhill Baths, Glasgow, 2009), organised by community activists and populated via an open call for artworks, without a professional curator as middleman.⁵¹ It could also include exhibitions and residencies run out of homes or empty urban spaces, funded by personal budgets, or by groups who consciously seek to utilise their collective exhibition-making and art practice as a process through which to problematise the concept of exhibition-making as a purely professional activity. For example, at the Liverpool-based, 'Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home', the collective *twoaddthree* work as a family and offer 'a space for dissenting the Capitalism of Culture' as part of an ongoing residency programme funded through their own family budget.⁵² Leeds-based collective *Black Dogs'* exhibition-making practice, offers a further example. Their exhibition *Next To Nothing* was the result of a series of discussions around 'non-capitalist' practice that was fully documented in a free fanzine. Their fanzine explained their position; how they used their status as 'non-professionals' to subvert capitalist constructs in reference to Holloway and Hardt and Hegri's theory.⁵³ As their website states: 'Black Dogs is maintained through the dedication of spare-time and a collective belief that time outside of paid employment can be used productively and enjoyably to problematise the capitalist constructs of 'work' and

⁵⁰ In this respect, the international mail art network, particularly the branches operating in Latin America in the 1970s and the exhibitions of Paulo Bruscky, would likewise be an excellent example of this kind of counter-institutional practice, where there is no clear distinction between artistic and curatorial function.

⁵¹ The exhibition for example, was organised by a local community organisation, the Govanhill Baths Art and Regeneration Team. It aimed to bring the issue of the Baths' closure back to the fore, by opening up the doors to the local public and politicians and 'creatively engaging people in reflecting upon and changing the area in which they live'. For more on the process of producing the exhibition see: <http://archive.publicartscotland.com/reflections/36> (accessed 13/03/13). Artists were selected on the basis of the appropriateness to the aims of the project rather than their track record or professional status of the maker. It had an explicitly political objective in that it was intended to contribute to the reopening of the pool. The artists, invigilators, tour guides and curators, who were all predominately drawn from the local community, worked on a voluntary basis and any money raised from sales of the catalogue or works was ploughed back into the Trust.

⁵² It is run by the family collective twoaddthree (Gary Anderson, Lena Simic and their children Neal, Gabriel and Sid) from their own home. This group was originally set up in 2007 as a counter-project to the 2008 Liverpool City of Culture festival. They are interested in generating discussion around alternatives to capitalism, home-made aesthetics, class and the relationship between private and public spaces. For more information and examples of work see: <http://www.twoaddthree.org/> (accessed 14/12/2014). A further example would be Oda Projesi, a collective of three women artists, who rented out a flat in an apartment block in Istanbul for the local community to use for art-making workshops and community-based projects. Oda Projesi (Room Projects) are three artists, Özge Acikkol, Gunes Savas and Secil Yersel, have been working together since 1997 before formalising themselves as a collective in 2000, when they rented a three-room flat in Galata, Istanbul. They staged over 30 projects their between 2000 and 2005. For more information see: <http://odaprojesi.blogspot.co.uk/> (accessed 01.08.2014).

⁵³ Black Dogs, *Next to Nothing: An exhibition on the price of nothing and the value of everything*, The Light, Leeds City Centre, 15th September – 1st October 2011. The minutes of the meetings, crits and evaluative discussions are available in Black Dogs, *Next To Nothing Fifth Almanac*, 2011, pp. 96-108. For a summary of the exhibition see: <http://black-dogs.org/index.php?/2011/next-to-nothing/> (accessed 13.05.2013).

'leisure'.⁵⁴ None of the practices outlined above have been developed by people who would define themselves as curators, but rather represent a blurring of the boundaries between curatorial, artistic, community building and political functions to create new knowledge and new discourses, outside of the institutional art-world. Although this type of work correlates with the idea of 'exodus', professional curators do not acknowledge it in the curator-led discourse – perhaps as they see it as a threat to their status.⁵⁵

This has led to a strange situation where autonomist ideas have, somewhat contradictorily, been co-opted by professional curators and applied to their practice within institutional frameworks. As O'Neill has noted, Hardt and Negri have accrued a group of 'curator-followers' that have adopted the idea of the 'multitude', and reimagined the global network of biennials as *the* counter-Empire.⁵⁶ These curators have evidently taken a different reading of *Empire*, where even art institutions such as the Venice Biennial are understood as being just one more site in the 'everyday' and the 'everyplace'. Okwui Enwezor stated, for example:

In the context of curatorial practice, *Empire* was also read avidly.... Reflecting back now on the idea of a deterritorialized Documenta (which was finally completed in 2002), it becomes even clearer to me just how much the critical acuity of *Empire* pervaded our thinking.⁵⁷

Whilst recognising the Venice Biennial and Documenta as 'the epicentres of the imperial regimes of cultural control', Enwezor nonetheless argues that these institutions can play a central role in the formation of a 'counter-Empire'.⁵⁸ He claims his own attempt to decentre Documenta as an exercise in counter-Empire building.

⁵⁴ The quote is taken from a statement which appears on their website. See: <http://black-dogs.org/index.php?/projects/what-is-black-dogs/> (accessed 13.05.2013).

⁵⁵ Interestingly, almost all of the collectives, groups and individuals cited above have had to face dilemmas after being approached by major art institutions wanting to feature their work in some capacity. Gregory Sholette has documented the contradictions of the PAD/D archive now being subsumed into the MoMA archive, noting that the restriction imposed by MoMA that the archive be closed to further additions is testament to the fact that such institutions can only ever accommodate radical leftist art once an actual threat to authority has been foreclosed. See: Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter*, Pluto Press, London, 2011, p.25. Maria Lind, has written from a curatorial and institutional perspective, about the difficulties posed by trying to accommodate Oda Projesi's practice in a decontextualised and institutional setting at the Kunstverein München. See Maria Lind, *Actualisation of Space: The Case of Oda Projesi*, October 2004, available in English on the EIPCP website: <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1204/lind/en> (accessed 21.05.2013). Black Dogs entered into a prolonged series of critical discussions as a collective to debate whether to accept an invitation to take part in an event entitled *No Soul for Sale*, a festival of independents that was held to celebrate Tate Modern's 10th birthday in 2010. See the discussion about their participation in the event on the Black Dogs website: <http://www.black-dogs.org/index.php?/recent-current/how-not-to-sell-your-soul-at-tate-modern/> (accessed 21.05.2013). This highlights the drive and the capacity of institutions in Post-Fordist capitalism to recuperate subversive discourses and practices.

⁵⁶ Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture*, The MIT Press, Cambridge and London, pp. 62-66.

⁵⁷ Okwui Enwezor, 'Reckoning with Empire', *Artforum* October 2009.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

However, this move to extend the boundaries of the monolithic exhibition outwards into the world does precisely the opposite of what Hardt and Negri argue for – ‘the evacuation of places of power’.⁵⁹ Expanding the power and reach of Documenta, through academic seminars in comfortable and exclusive Western locations, within non-Western cultures, such as the Hyatt Hotel Lucia or the Goethe Institute in Lagos, represents a withdrawal of resistance into a closed art world discourse. It is, thus, a consolidation and extension of, rather than a defection from, institutional power and control.

Similarly, Esche has attempted to fuse autonomist ideas with institutional practice. He describes taking inspiration from both autonomist ideas and pre-1989 leftist models of political activism that he, personally, was involved in – grassroots practices that took political discourse out onto the street and prioritised one-to-one communication to engage with, and persuade, working class people of their intellectual argument on equal terms.⁶⁰ He argues that there is an urgent need for institutions to attempt this level of political engagement with people outside of the museum, and to use this objective to define their practices. His concept of the ‘dispersed museum’ involves leaving the architecture of the museum behind and bringing both art and politics out of the institution and onto the street using ‘guerilla tactics’.⁶¹ Whilst making these calls for an urgent dispersal of institutional power, Esche has, rather perplexingly, been developing new avenues to *consolidate* institutional power by bringing together several medium-sized institutions into one union. He has been instrumental in establishing a new network of ‘progressive’ European institutions (Reina Sofia, Madrid, MACBA, Barcelona, SALT, Istanbul, Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana, M HKA, Antwerp and the Van Abbemuseum) called L’Internationale, which aims to provide a collective counter-narrative to the hegemonic institutional story of art, dictated by major art institutions.

⁵⁹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge and London, 2000 p. 212.

⁶⁰ Charles Esche, ‘The Deviant Art Institution’ in *Performing the Institutional*, Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon, 2010. Available online at: http://www.academia.edu/2583026/The_Deviant_Art_Institution (accessed 04.09.2015) p.15.

⁶¹ Esche states: ‘Dispersing activity away from a central building, adopting almost guerilla tactics or pop-up appearances where art merges with the street or the housing estate are other ways in which the modest, ‘minor strand’ institution can situate itself in new relations to its publics... Thinking about the specific qualities of a location rather than reproducing exhibitions as autonomous touring entities are further useful ways of reconstructing the traditional European art institutions’. See: Charles Esche, ‘The Deviant Art Institution’ in *Performing the Institutional*, Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon, 2010 available online at: http://www.academia.edu/2583026/The_Deviant_Art_Institution (accessed 04.09.2015) Although Esche hasn’t yet managed to achieve his ideal of a ‘dispersed museum’ he has laid the foundations through projects he has established during his Directorship of the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. For the *Qiuzhuang Project – a dispersed museum project* the Van Abbemuseum allowed artist Li Mu to borrow and make copies of works in their collection such as Sol LeWitt’s *Untitled (Wall Structure)* (1972) to show in his home village in China. See: <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/qiuzhuang-project-the-making-of-meeting-and-charles-esche-as-new-director/> (accessed 13.04.2014).

This is not to say that curators such as Enwezor and Esche do not make genuine attempts to disarticulate and reconfigure the standard practices of hegemonic institutions, rather it is to demonstrate that the strategies they operate are completely at odds with the theoretical positions of Hardt and Negri, Virno and Holloway. Their attempts have much more in common, on a strategic level, with the approach that Chantal Mouffe advocates: counter-hegemonic curating from within.

1.4 Counter-Hegemonic Curating from Within

In opposition to the idea of 'exodus', a second form of leftist curatorial practice has developed, influenced by the political scientist, Chantal Mouffe.⁶² In her 2010 essay for *Art Forum* Mouffe criticises professional curators for celebrating the idea of 'exodus'. In her view, 'endorsing this course of action is... profoundly mistaken and clearly disempowering, because it impedes us from recognising the multiplicity of avenues that would otherwise be open for political engagement'.⁶³ It prevents people from recognising the potential for transforming these powerful institutions into counter-hegemonic apparatus.⁶⁴ Mouffe cites the fact that their normative educative role has been recently transformed by neo-liberal capitalism into one of entertainment and consumerism, as evidence that there is possibility for the nature of its role to change again. Indeed, the major public art institutions are a critical site for the instigation of counter-hegemonic strategies that can subvert the dominant neoliberal orthodoxy, precisely because they play a crucial role in constituting capitalist subjects and reinforcing liberal ideology.⁶⁵ Institutional exhibitions operate in the same terrain of

⁶² Mouffe has become a ubiquitous feature of the international biennial circuit. I attended a lecture by Chantal Mouffe as part of the Marx Lounge, organized by Alfredo Jaar, for the Liverpool Biennial in 2010. She was keynote speaker at the World Biennial Forum No.1, *Shifting Gravity*, 27–31 October 2012, Gwangju, South Korea, with a talk entitled *Beyond Cosmopolitanism*. Some further examples include: Cork Caucus, 2005 (Institute of Choreography and Dance - Firkin Crane), delivering a presentation entitled *Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices?*, The 4th Bucharest Biennial, in 2010 speaking about *Agonistic Politics in the Age of Post-Fordism*, and the 2nd Moscow Biennial, in 2007, for which she delivered a presentation called *Agonistic Public Spaces: Democratic Politics and the Dynamics of Passions* accessible online here:

http://2nd.moscowbiennale.ru/en/mouffe_report_en/ (accessed 21/12.14). Articles published in art journals and magazines are also too numerous to chart in full but include: Chantal Mouffe, 'Museum as Agonistic Spaces', *Artforum International*, 'The Museum Revisited' Vol. 48, No. 10, Summer 2010 p. 326-330, Chantal Mouffe, 'Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces', *Art and Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, Volume 1, Number 2, Summer 2007, Chantal Mouffe, 'Art as an agonistic intervention in public space' in *Art as a public issue: how art and its institutions reinvent the public dimension*, Open (14), NAI Publishers, Rotterdam and Amsterdam, 2008, Chantal Mouffe, 'Cultural workers as organic intellectuals' in Stephan Schmidt-Wulffen (ed.), *The art as public intellectual*, Schlebrügge, Vienna, pp. 150-160.

⁶³ Chantal Mouffe, 'Museum as Agonistic Spaces', *Artforum International*, 'The Museum Revisited' Vol. 48, No. 10, Summer 2010, p.326

⁶⁴ Mouffe articulates the main differences between her 'counter-hegemonic critique from within' and the autonomist's 'exodus' or 'withdrawal from institutions' in an article for EIPCP (The European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies) entitled *Critique as Counter-Hegemonic Intervention* (April, 2008). Available online here; <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0808/mouffe/en> (accessed 08/02/2013).

⁶⁵ Chantal Mouffe, "Museum as Agonistic Spaces", *Artforum International*, 'The Museum Revisited' Vol. 48, No. 10, Summer 2010 , p.327

subject building, and image creation as advertising and can, thus, intervene actively and directly in this discourse, in order to subvert the ways in which images are produced, reproduced and circulated.⁶⁶ In other words, through the art that they show, and the way in which they show it, they can offer alternative non-consumerist and non-capitalist ways of thinking about ourselves, the role we can play in society and the ways that society can operate. The art museum – ‘far from being an institution to be deserted posthaste – becomes a crucial site of political contestation’.⁶⁷

Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau’s ‘articulation theory’ – the process of producing meaning by bringing together certain elements (people, objects, words, and so on) in a specific way – also provides a framework that lends itself to the analysis of exhibitions. Additionally, it can aid the development of counter-hegemonic exhibition-making practices. According to their theory, an ‘articulatory practice’ is always an ideological process driven by a particular person, group or institution in pursuit of their specific interests.⁶⁸ As such, the meaning of social institutions, including exhibitions, is always formed through precarious ‘moments’ of articulation. Crucially, as their term ‘moment’ indicates, the meaning of elements is only ever temporarily fixed and can be transformed by a process of disarticulation and rearticulation. It is always possible to disarticulate a hegemonic discourse: various moments can be broken apart and the individual elements can be disconnected from each other.⁶⁹ This paves the way for new ‘moments’ of rearticulation, when excluded elements can be re-introduced and others excluded (or placed in a different order), new connotations attached to them, or simply brought together in a different place or time. In the context of an exhibition, this could include, featuring work by marginalised groups that had previously been excluded, showing work in new contexts, such as in Thomas Hirschhorn’s project exhibition,

⁶⁶ Mouffe states that she is: ‘convinced that cultural and artistic practices could play an important role in the agnostic struggle because they are a privileged terrain for the construction of new subjectivities. Think for instance, of the success of feminist artistic practices in undermining the hegemonic order by revealing how the construction of images contributed to the construction and reproduction of oppressive social norms and by offering alternative views’. See: Chantal Mouffe, ‘Democratic Politics in the Age of Post-Fordism’ in ‘The Art Biennial as a Global Phenomenon: Strategies in Neo-Political Times’, *Open* (16), NAI Publishers, Rotterdam and Amsterdam, 2009, p.40.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Though these elements (people, objects, words, economic arrangements and so on) may exist physically outside of the discourse, their meaning or their identity is only defined through their relations to other elements, and thus when they are brought together in a particular order, by a particular person, group or institution, at a particular time, in a particular context or economic arrangement, to form a discourse. However, this is not to say that what is intended is always actually what is articulated, that there is only one person or one institution doing the articulation and that all those ‘articulating’ have the same intentions. For example, John Storey has given the example, of how Bob Marley’s music was intended by the artist to articulate a clear anti-capitalist position, and was thus articulated within the anti-capitalist discourse of the Rastafari religion, but this discourse was also simultaneously ‘articulated’ by his record label Island Records in the economic interests of capitalism. See John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, Routledge, London, 2010, p.89.

⁶⁹ See: Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Verso, London, 1985.

Musée Précaire Albinet, or it could mean organising or thematising the work to create new meaning.⁷⁰ For Mouffe, hegemonic practices are, thus, those ‘articulatory practices through which a certain order is established and the meaning of social institutions fixed’, and counter-hegemonic practices are ‘practices which attempt to disarticulate the existing order so as to install another form of hegemony’.⁷¹ By introducing the phrase ‘counter-hegemonic curating from within’, I refer to any curatorial approach that, in accordance with Mouffe’s position, aims to counter the neoliberal hegemony, by disarticulating and rearticulating the standard exhibition-making practices of an art institution, from a position within that institution.

Mouffe also argues that innovative forms of institutional practice could help foster a new radical leftist democratic model, capable of offering a viable alternative to neoliberalism.⁷² She has been primarily concerned with developing an alternative model of democratic governance to the deliberative democracy advanced by Jürgen Habermas, which, in her view, helps to sustain the absolute hegemony of neoliberal capitalism.⁷³ Her problem with this consensus-orientated approach is that, by asking people to set their personal convictions aside from their political decision-making, it prevents them from being able to think and interact politically. By asking citizens to bracket off their personal ethical and moral values when considering political issues, the most divisive issues are taken off the public agenda and political questions become reduced to ‘mere technical issues to be solved by experts’.⁷⁴ As Mouffe states, ‘there is much talk today of “dialogue” and “deliberation”, but what is the meaning of such words in the political field, if no real choice is at hand and if the participants in the discussion are not able to decide between clearly differentiated alternatives’.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ He showed ‘precious’ art objects in a temporary structure in a working-class suburb of Paris. See: Alfred Pacquement, *The Precarious Museum*, Tate Etc. issue 2: Autumn 2004, <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/precarious-museum> (accessed 12.03.2015).

⁷¹ Here, hegemony describes how the dominant social-class maintains and reinforces their position over other social-classes primarily through the persuasive presentation of its own particular ideas as universal, rational, objective and for the benefit of the whole of society. In order to open up the possibility that things could be otherwise – and they always could – it is necessary to understand that no social practices are self-grounded or entirely rational and that the very idea of common-sense conceals the political rationality and ideology that underpins the way our society is structured and the way its public institutions operate. See: Chantal Mouffe Chantal Mouffe, ‘Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces’, *Art and Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, Volume 1, Number 2, Summer 2007.

⁷² Mouffe, accordingly, defines the task of democratic theorists and politicians as being ‘to envisage the creation of a vibrant ‘agonistic’ public sphere of contestation where different hegemonic political projects can be confronted’. Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*, Routledge, London. 2005, p.3.

⁷³ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Verso, London, 1985.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*, Routledge, London. 2005, p.3.

Moreover, deliberative democracy fails to grasp the necessity of antagonism in social life and the impossibility of finding rational solutions to all forms of conflict.

Mouffe offers the alternative concept of 'agonism' – a form of conflict based on a great respect for both one's opponents and the process of struggle itself – as the basis for the development of a new form of radical democratic politics. For Mouffe, it is essential that if the left is to offer a viable alternative to neoliberal consensus politics, and far-right or nationalist positions, it must mobilise political passion by stimulating an active political discourse, centered on people's fundamental beliefs, values and principles – rather than technocratic questions.⁷⁶ In her model of 'Agonistic Pluralism', the point of democratic politics is not to eradicate antagonism, but to instead provide a common symbolic ground that allows people to fully express their different, conflicting positions, in an atmosphere of mutual respect.⁷⁷ In sharp contrast to the idea of 'exodus', she argues that the existing public art institutions can be completely rearticulated as spaces for the enactment of an agonistic, pluralistic politics, where people can ask 'proper political questions' and where antagonistic positions can be laid out and debated within an open and truly public forum.⁷⁸

It is clear from the curator-led discourse that 'counter-hegemonic curating from within' has become the dominant framework through which leftist curators seek to conceptualise, talk about and carry out their practice. Despite the prevalence of autonomist rhetoric it has proved a more viable option to leftist professional curators than the 'exodus approach', as it legitimates their continued working with existing institutions. Mouffe's ideas about the social necessity of antagonism and her model of the institutional exhibition as an agonistic public space, have taken particular hold in

⁷⁶ By highlighting the us/them binary Mouffe is referring to the friend/enemy opposition, described by Carl Schmitt as an ever-present constituent of social relations and the foundation of 'the political'. She argues that politics is always concerned with the creation of an 'us' by the determination of a 'them'. The danger of suppressing the articulation of different positions and of not acknowledging the presence of confrontation in society, is that far-right, fundamentalist, nationalist and extremist parties, who never shirk from expressing a clearly defined position with a clearly defined enemy, will become the only oppositional discourse that is heard. For these groups, people are united principally by excluding 'the other': the us/them dichotomy is exaggerated around the most immediate and fixed differences between people (religion, race, sexuality or nationally) and all political problems can be solved by eliminating the presence of 'them'. See: Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, translated by George Schwab, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996, p. 35 and Chantal Mouffe, 'Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism', *Political Science Series*, 7, pp.1-17

⁷⁷ Mouffe expands upon Carl Schmidt's concept of 'the political' – the particular moments where conflicting positions come into confrontation with each other – to argue that a proper politics must not seek overcome the us/them divide but to enable people to understand those with opposing views as adversaries with positions they have a right to defend, rather than enemies that must be silenced, excluded or eliminated See: Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, Verso, London, 2000, p.15 and Chantal Mouffe, 'Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces', 2007

⁷⁸ Ibid.

this discourse. So, for example, Søren Andreasen and Lars Bang Larsen argue that the curator's role should be: 'to start making conflicts instead of solving them, to see how ideas collide rather than creating consensus'.⁷⁹

Mouffe's continued engagement with curators has provided the impetus, and her ideas the theoretical framework, for curators to attempt to change the way that existing art institutions operate and to develop new forms of exhibition-making practice. Several different new forms of curatorial practice have emerged, influenced by her theory that has vastly different conceptions of the centrality and political potential of the exhibition medium. They have, however unintentionally, resulted in a crisis around the exhibition form. Key debates have emerged around whether the art institution can offer a more effective challenge to the neoliberal hegemony, by focusing on discursive events, or by focusing on the exhibition as a political medium. Some curators have interpreted Mouffe's ideas, in my view, correctly; understanding the exhibition as a fundamentally 'political medium' that can be articulated in such a way to subvert the wider 'contaminated' agenda of the institution. However, many leftist curators have come to view the exhibition itself as a hegemonic and didactic form that cannot produce the discourses necessary to stimulate political change. The exhibition is, as a result, a reduced part of art institutional practice, which increasingly gives over its visual and spatial properties to discourse.

Mouffe's theories have had a significant impact on those practices known variously as New Institutionalism (Jonas Ekeberg) or Experimental Institutionalism (Charles Esche). Both were initiated spontaneously by directors of mainly medium-sized art institutions, around the turn of the millennium, and aimed at developing new forms of institutionality.⁸⁰ In New Institutionalist practices, the Director is typically positioned as

⁷⁹ Søren Andreasen and Lars Bang Larsen, *The Middleman: Beginning to Talk About Mediation*, in Paul O'Neill (ed.), *Curating Subjects*, Open Editions and De Appel; London & Amsterdam, 2007 p.28-29

⁸⁰ Jonas Ekeberg describes the origin of the term thus: 'I was the first curator at the Office for Contemporary Art Norway in 2002. Together with director Ute Meta Bauer and co-curator Christiane Erhardt I worked on establishing OCA as a new kind of cultural exchange institution, one that was not geared towards promotion but towards engaging in current artistic and societal discourses. It was for OCA I edited the volume on New Institutionalism where the term was introduced'. See "The term was snapped out of the air": An Interview with Jonas Ekeberg, p.20. In the same publication Charles Esche describes his preference for the term 'experimental institutionalism': 'That's why New Institutionalism bothers me, because I think we were in an experimental phase and I don't think we were conscious or striving to be 'new.' We were learning by doing, it was really pragmatic in that sense. Let's find out how things work, but on our terms. I don't feel happy about the word 'new' because it is such a neoliberal term. It sounds like "new, improved washing powder" or whatever product to me, and that's not what it was really about. It was not a marketing tool and I think this is why it failed within the contemporary framework of economic attention in a sense, although it did clearly establish a certain identity, a new one that will replace it. Rather we said times have changed since the modern age and the institutions don't know how to'. See: Lucie Kolb and Gabriel Flückiger, "We were learning by doing": An Interview with Charles

the primary agent of change who must re-orientate the whole of the institution's practices, to subvert its hegemonic function and reinvent its social role. There was a micro-political drive to redefine the social role of the institution by engaging with local community groups and providing spaces for the public display of their interests. However, this was part of a wider macro-political aim of resisting the 'totality of global capitalism' to 'install other forms of democracy than the ones we had'.⁸¹ As Alex Farquharson identified, the vision of radical democracy that these curators sought to offer was, essentially, 'an "agonistic pluralism" of adversaries'.⁸²

Manuel J. Borja-Villel, whilst Director of MACBA, Barcelona, between 1999 and 2008, for example, sought to reinvent the whole institution's ethos, social role and working practices, in order to create a new institutionalism based on Mouffe's theory, that could challenge the neoliberal hegemony.⁸³ As Head of Public Programmes, Jorge Ribalta, related:

Our starting point is an understanding of social life as being constituted by different publics, with differing interests... It is precisely this potential and this openness that guarantee the existence of a democratic public sphere, a space that does not have to be unitary to be democratic, as Chantal Mouffe has theorised... The idea is to give 'publics' agency, to foster their capacity for action and look beyond the limitations of traditional divisions between actor and spectator, and between producer and consumer.⁸⁴

Here he describes each project that they formulated was part of an overall plan to rearticulate the museum as a space for 'agonistic pluralism'.

Esche, p.27 Both interviews are in Lucie Kolb and Gabriel Flückiger, 'New Institutionalism Revisited', *On Curating*, Issue 21, December 2013.

⁸¹ Charles Esche in Alex Farquharson, *Bureaux de Change*, Frieze no. 101, September 2006. And in "We were learning by doing": An Interview with Charles Esche', p.27 in Lucie Kolb and Gabriel Flückiger, 'New Institutionalism Revisited', *On Curating*, Issue 21, December 2013 and in Lucie Kolb and Gabriel Flückiger, 'New Institutionalism Revisited', *On Curating*, Issue 21, December 2013 p.24.

⁸² Alex Farquharson discussing the legacy of New Institutionalism in Alex Farquharson, *Bureaux de Change*, Frieze no. 101, September 2006. Available online: http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/bureaux_de_change/ (accessed 14.05.13).

⁸³ Mouffe was even invited to deliver a lecture as part of a seminar on *Globalisation and Cultural Differentiation* at MACBA in 1999, right at the beginning of Borja-Villel's tenure. See: Chantal Mouffe, 'For A Politics of Democratic Identity', delivered as part of the *Globalization and Cultural differentiation* seminar. March 19-20, 1999, MACBA'-CCCB. The content of this lecture was reprinted in *Antagonisms: Case Studies* (A newspaper produced as part of the exhibition of the same name which was held at MACBA from 26th July- 14th October 2001). This text is available online at: http://www.macba.es/antagonismos/english/09_04.html (accessed 12.08.14). It is clear from Head of Public Programmes, Jorge Ribalta's excellent analysis, *Experiments in New Institutionalality*, just how central the ideas she expressed in this lecture were to the formation and theorisation of their institutional practice. See: Jorge Ribalta, 'Experiments in a New Institutionalality' in Jorge Ribalta and Manuel Borja-Villel (eds.), *Relational Objects: MACBA Collection 2002-2007*, MACBA Publications, Barcelona, 2010, Available online: http://www.macba.cat/PDFs/jorge_ribalta_colleccio_eng.pdf (accessed 08.08.14).

⁸⁴ Ribalta describes Agonistic Pluralism as a counter-model that 'constitutes a singular understanding of the museum as a space for debate and conflict, and a critical re-reading of the modern tradition, that brings together artistic methods, social knowledge and action in the public sphere'. Ibid p.226. Mouffe also sites Ribalta's description of MACBA's practice as the embodiment of her theoretical proposition in the footnotes to her article for *Art Forum*. See: Chantal Mouffe, 'Museum as Agonistic Spaces', *Artforum International*, 'The Museum Revisited' Vol. 48, No. 10, Summer 2010, p.329.

Whilst there is now a broad consensus that ‘New Institutionalism’ has died out, the central curatorial methodologies, that constituted this form of practice, live on.⁸⁵ Indeed, many of its core ideas have crossed over into mainstream institutions and become ‘part and parcel of everyday curatorial practice’.⁸⁶ Though, as we shall see, Borja-Villel and Ribalta at MACBA developed a mode of ‘new institutionalism’ that successfully combined counter-hegemonic exhibition-making with an active programme of discursive events and participatory activities, other Director-curators, more commonly negated the exhibition medium in their quest to facilitate political discussion. The phenomenon in contemporary practice, known variously as ‘the paracuratorial’ (Jens Hoffman) or ‘the curatorial’ (Maria Lind) has, for example, provided a new definition of curatorial practice that is no longer intrinsically bound to traditional exhibition-making, but rather makes the discursive or participatory activities that have traditionally been perceived as auxiliary outputs, the central function of the art institution, or the event.

Lind argues that ‘the curatorial’ is a methodology that is aimed at countering consensus politics through the staging of antagonistic positions.⁸⁷ She states that: ‘the curatorial would thus parallel Chantal Mouffe’s notion of ‘the political’ (an aspect of life that cannot be separated from divergence and dissent; a set of practices which disturbs existing power relations’).⁸⁸ She contends that if an art institution is to turn antagonism into agonism and transform enemies into adversaries – as Mouffe advocates – they have to allow people with antagonistic positions to come together and voice these positions. In her view, this can most productively be achieved by those activities that are more able to actually facilitate production and dialogue such as talks, workshops, debates, residency, lectures, films, programmes, and music and so on.

Since the mid-noughties, there has also been an increasing number of so-called ‘discursive exhibitions’, produced by professional curators, which seek to enact a wider

⁸⁵ The majority of the more experimental venues have been closed, their Directors moved on and their operations reverted to more ‘business as usual’ formats.

⁸⁶ Vanessa Joan Müller, ‘Relays’, *The Exhibitionist*, No.4, ‘La Critique’, June 2011, p. 67.

⁸⁷ Boris Groys, Maria Lind, Anton Vidokle, ‘A Different Name for Communism’, *Displayer*, a magazine on the politics of exhibiting in/of space, published by Exhibition Design and Curatorial Practice, University of Arts and Design and ZKM, Karlsruhe, Issue 04, April 2012, pp.334-5.

⁸⁸ Maria Lind, ‘Active Cultures: Maria Lind on The Curatorial’ *Artforum International*, Vol. 48, No. 2, October 2009.

critique of neoliberal economics, by addressing local political concerns. For example, the curatorial statements for the *Cork Caucus: Art, Possibility, and Democracy*, organised by Annie Fletcher, Charles Esche and Art/Not Art, in 2005, put particular emphasis on the groundwork for the project being carried out a grassroots level.⁸⁹ They used the term ‘caucus’ to signify their aim of establishing a political community from the bottom up, without any fixed institutional base or party ties, that would ideally transcend the space and time of a conventional exhibition. They claimed that the ‘the word *caucus* links the project directly to the process of making a democratic decision in a collective gathering’.⁹⁰ Tellingly, one of the central questions that emerged for the organisers, when they revisited the project, was ‘could the Cork Caucus have happened without artists?’⁹¹

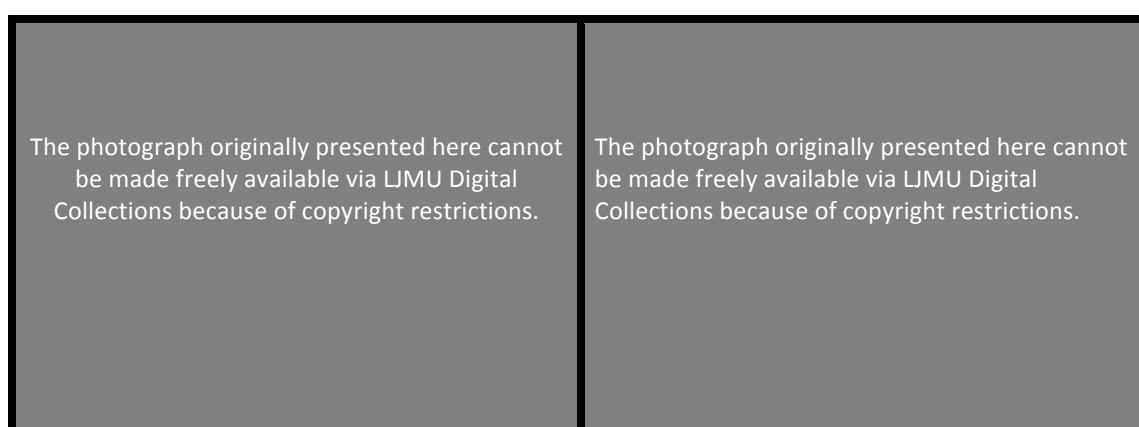


Fig. 1. *The Convergence Centre, Democracy in America: The National Campaign, Park Avenue Armory, New York, 2008* and Fig. 2. *Chantal Mouffe speaking at the Cork Caucus in 2005* Photo: Paul White 2005 © NSF.

Creative Time’s year-long and nation-wide *Democracy in America: The National Campaign*, was intended to ‘promote active participation and open discourse during the 2008 election season, and beyond’. The curators aimed to do this ‘by engaging a diverse community of artists, activists, thinkers, and citizens to create spaces for

⁸⁹ “Given that democracy has to function at the most local level to be meaningful, Cork Caucus has invested much of its time in developing situations in the city through the *Grassroots* phase. It will be through the tensions and opportunities that arise between local initiatives and the international art participants that some of its possibilities will be revealed”. See the original e-flux announcement available online at: <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/cork-caucus-june-20th-%E2%80%93-july-11th-2005/> (accessed 12.08.2014).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ The event *Re-gathering on the Grounds of Art: A Public Discussion* took place in the Granary Theatre, Cork, Ireland, in June 2008, three years after the Cork Caucus as part of the Van Abbe Museum’s *Becoming Dutch* project. ‘The aim of the discussion is to look at the impact of discursive/conversational practices and models (similar to Cork Caucus) on public life, and also to ask the question: could the Cork Caucus happen/have happened without artists?’ See: <http://www.becomingdutch.com/events/?s=0,15,0> (accessed 12.08.2014).

dialogue, exploration, and congregation'.⁹² It consisted of a series of public art interventions, town hall meetings, speeches by academics, political theorists and activists, and mobile projects, such as an ice cream truck that delivered political paraphernalia, along with free ice creams. It did culminate in an exhibition called *The Convergence Centre*, held at the Park Avenue Armory, New York, but even this was comprised of art works intended to provide a platform for public discussion, such as Paul Ramirez Jonas's series of podiums, platforms and soapboxes, on which people were invited to give political speeches.⁹³ Thompson revealed, in an interview with Claire Bishop, that the emphasis on discursivity and performativity was, for him, a response to the need 'to confront an atrocious and bellicose regime... which outweighed the importance of a quality artwork'.⁹⁴ That it is now questioned whether the exhibition or the art are really an integral part of curatorial practice, is testament to the significant impact that radical leftist theory has had on the way that curators understand their work.

A sense of political urgency was also behind the proposal for a more complete abandonment of the traditional exhibition format at the ill-fated *Manifesta VI* (2006), planned for the divided Cypriot capital Nicosia.⁹⁵ The three international curators appointed to develop the event – Mai Abu ElDahab, Anton Vidokle and Florian Waldvogel – shared a desire to directly link art to the immediate political and social concerns of Nicosia. They also shared the concern that the exhibition was an insufficient medium through which to achieve this, in an area of political tension.⁹⁶ Vidokle described the reasons for their disavowal of the exhibition in his essay entitled *Notes for an Art School*:

⁹² See the introduction to the project on the Creative Time website:

<http://www.creativetime.org/programs/archive/2008/democracy/about.php> (accessed 25.08.2014).

⁹³ It was even described by curator Nato Thompson, as a 'collection of soapboxes' during an online tour of the exhibition available via You Tube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pe_nbvch5Bc (accessed 20.08.2014).

⁹⁴ Nato Thompson interviewed by Claire Bishop (p.40) in 'Experimental Activism: Claire Bishop Interviews Nato Thompson, *Manifesta Journal: Journal of Contemporary Curatorship*, Issue 10, 2009/2010, pp. 38-50.

⁹⁵ Martin Herbert's article for Frieze captures the confusion surrounding the cancellation of the event and explains each curator's perspective See: Martin Herbert, 'School's Out', *Frieze*, Issue 101, September 2006. Available online at:

http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/schools_out/ (accessed 20.08.2014). The curator's also wrote an open letter published through E-flux to explain why the event had been cancelled. See: 'Black Hole: A letter from Mai Abu ElDahab, Anton Vidokle and Florian Waldvogel, former curators of Manifesta 6' *E-Flux*, June 6, 2006 available to view online at: <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/letter-from-former-curators-of-manifesta-6/> (accessed 20.08.2014).

⁹⁶ See their different accounts presented in: *Notes for an Art School*, Manifesta 6 School Books, 2006. Available to download online: <http://manifesta.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/NotesForAnArtSchool.pdf> (accessed 21.08.2014)

Perhaps the exhibition is not the place to start... It is one thing to bring together a group of colleagues at a designated space under the rubric of an 'exhibition' in London or Berlin, it is another altogether to do the same thing in the Cypriot capital... The political situation is already prominently displayed by an ever-present green line – a presence so strong as to render other 'political displays' superficial at best. In other words the situation demands not commentary but involvement and production.⁹⁷

Vidolke makes a salient point that representational exhibitions are not the most direct use of art to mobilise publics. For him they tend to engender passive, uncritical consumption, whereas involving the public in art production could have a much more immediate transformative and potentially activating impact on those involved.

Vidolke's concern that the exhibition format could only offer a superficial monologue, led to the development of a, potentially effective, alternative approach. The group developed a proposal for a temporary 'art school', intended to enable the exploration of political issues through discourse, debate and trans-disciplinary production.⁹⁸ However, the counter-hegemonic potential of this model could never be tested out or critically evaluated. *Manifesta VI* was, ironically, cancelled, because it had become too entangled in local politics. It was ultimately revealing of the limitations of art institutions to engage in real political conflict.

Although Vidolke created an alternative temporary art school called *unitednationsplaza*, in Berlin, it lacked the emphasis on art production in the original proposals for Nicosia, focusing instead on pure discourse. It consisted of a series of talks, lectures, seminars and dinner speeches by established, curators and artists, which were, rather predictably, almost exclusively attended by art-world insiders.⁹⁹ Panel discussions were hosted in a place of 'hospitality and convivial interaction', and

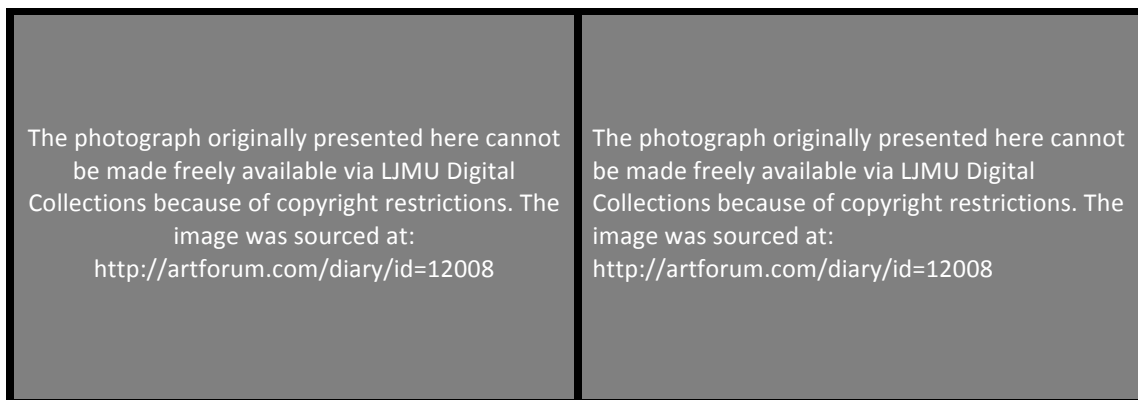
⁹⁷ Anton Vidokle, 'Exhibition as School in a Divided City', p.1 in *Notes for an Art School*, Manifesta 6 School Books, 2006. Available to download online: <http://manifesta.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/NotesForAnArtSchool.pdf> (accessed 21.08.2014).

⁹⁸ The counter-hegemonic intent of the art school project was reinforced by ElDahab when she described it as a means of questioning the institutional art worlds' complicity in corporate globalisation by challenging the corporatisation of cultural production in a way that an exhibition could not. Mouffe's model of an agonistic public space was also echoed when she stated that the school 'should be overt and confrontational about its position as a hub for a proactive, politically engaged community of cultural producers'. Mai Abu ElDahab, 'On How to Fall With Grace – Or Fall Flat on Your Face', in *Notes for an Art School*, Manifesta 6 School Books, 2006, p.1. Available to download online: <http://manifesta.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/NotesForAnArtSchool.pdf> (accessed 21.08.2014).

⁹⁹ *unitednationsplaza* was a project by Anton Vidokle in collaboration with Boris Groys, Jalal Toufic, Liam Gillick, Martha Rosler, Natascha Sadr Haghighian, Nikolaus Hirsch, Tirdad Zolghadr and Walid Raad, which took place in Berlin from 2006-07. In 2008 the project was reconstituted at PAC in Mexico City and then redeveloped as *Night School* in the New Museum, New York. The *unitednationsplaza* website contains an archive of the talks and a list of those involved in all three editions of the projects <http://www.unitednationsplaza.org/> (accessed 21.08.2014). See Jennifer Allen's diary of the event for *Art Forum*: Jennifer Allen, 'Manifesta Destiny: Berlin, 11.04.2006' *Art Forum Diary*. Available online at: artforum.com/diary/id=12008 (accessed 21.08.2014).

the public invited to watch the discussion in a completely separate space, via a television screen.¹⁰⁰ With memories of the Cypriot fiasco fresh in their mind, the desire for an antagonistic political discourse also seemed to have been quickly subsumed by a desire to completely avoid conflict.

These examples (and there are many others) suggest that the move towards more discursive platforms is motivated by a common desire to develop counter-hegemonic and agonistic modes of practice within institutional frameworks. There is a belief that the institutional exhibition can only ever deliver a top-down closed narrative and offer passive modes of viewing that position the visitor as a spectator rather than active agent of change. Discursive events, it is argued, offer a more rational base for the development of an agonistic discourse, as they are perceived as essentially more democratic, pluralistic and inclusive. They also have the advantage that what is collectively said within them cannot be directly attributed to the curator or institution, mitigating the perceived obligation of impartiality, that restricts the articulation of direct political positions in institutional exhibitions.



Figs. 3 and 4. Invited guests enjoying the Unitednationsplaza events. Photographs are from the Art Forum Diary

As Taraneh Fazeli notes, discursive events are branded as ‘a means by which the agency of the art exhibition might be reclaimed’.¹⁰¹ However, without the art, it is questionable why such events should be considered an ‘exhibition’ at all. As these examples have shown, there is nothing really to distinguish them from other political forums and discussions, other than, perhaps, their situation within exclusive art world

¹⁰⁰ The irony of the conflict that unfolded when the television feed failed and the disgruntled viewers decided to blockade the panel in the kitchen is related in good humour by Taraneh Fazeli in an article for *Art Forum* entitled *Class Consciousness*. See: Taraneh Fazeli, ‘Class Consciousness’, in *Art Forum*, Issue. 47, Vol. 10, Summer 2009, p.129.

¹⁰¹ Taraneh Fazeli in an article for *Art Forum* entitled *Class Consciousness*. See: Taraneh Fazeli, ‘Class Consciousness’, in *Art Forum*, Issue. 47, Vol. 10, Summer 2009 p.130

institutions and a distinct lack of conflicting debate. Fazeli, reflecting specifically on the polite silence and fraternal unity at *Night School* (the New York based offshoot of *unitednationsplaza*) argued, for example, that the danger of such events is that ‘dissent and contention will fall away in favor of unity-seeking discourse in a hermetic quasi multiplicity’.

In foregrounding the discursive platforms, the traditional representational exhibition form has been increasingly negated by curators and pushed into the periphery, without critical reflection on the political efficacy of such strategies. This raises several important questions. What has really been gained by the negation of the exhibition form? Could the exhibition medium not also be productively reconfigured to ‘disturb existing power relations’, for example? Some curators certainly think so. Jens Hoffmann, one of the most outspoken critics of ‘paracuratorial practices’, argues that curating must be fundamentally defined by the craft of exhibition-making to be relevant and politically productive, and to avoid becoming pure performativity.¹⁰²

The curator-led discourse is thus split. In one camp there is those, like Vidolke who view the exhibition as a fundamentally hegemonic form and see the production of new discursive and productive platforms as the only way in which art institutions can effectively engage with radical politics. In the other, there are those like Hoffman and Riblata that, on the contrary, see the exhibition as a fundamentally political medium precisely because it is an ideological tool, which can be utilised for either hegemonic or counter-hegemonic purposes. Moreover the framing of such practice in relation to Mouffe’s theory is problematic. Mouffe would not argue for the desertion of the exhibition medium any more than she would the existing art institution.

The concept that I describe as ‘the exhibition as political medium’ shifts the focus of critique from the art institutions as the hegemonic authoritative body, to the exhibition as the medium through which it speaks. The emergence of this idea, in the curator-led

¹⁰² See for example his conversation with Maria Lind in *Mousse Magazine* where he states: “Too many curators seem to think exhibition making is a thing of the past and that today it has to be all about what I call the paracuratorial: lectures, screenings, exhibitions without art, working with artists on projects without ever producing anything that could be exhibited. I would not be worried about it if I saw it only here and there, but there is a big push toward it, and I feel that we actually still do not really understand the potential of exhibitions. They are an important social ritual, with vast possibilities. I do not think that the exhibition as a format for the display of art has been fully explored, and it certainly has not been exhausted”. Jens Hoffman and Maria Lind, *To Show or Not To Show*, Mousse Magazine, Issue 31, 2009. Available online at: <http://moussemagazine.it/articolo.mm?id=759> (accessed 28.06.13).

discourse, can be traced back to Bruce W. Ferguson's essay 'Exhibition Rhetorics', which instigated the critical deconstruction of the exhibition medium.¹⁰³ He argued that, in their attempts to reform and democratise themselves, art museums failed to recognise that it is through the exhibition medium, as a 'strategic system of representation' that the institution primarily speaks.¹⁰⁴ Following Ferguson's logic, any successful challenge to institutional cultural hegemony must necessarily entail an engagement with not only the political rationality, social role and power relations of the institution – their policing of who is permitted to speak and be heard, to be seen or not seen – but also with every one of the medium specific properties of the exhibition itself.¹⁰⁵

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev echoes Ferguson when describing her curation of the 16th Sydney Biennial, *Revolutions – Forms that Turn* (2008). Although she concedes that the exhibition is a 'device for repression a priori', she argues that, 'if you deconstruct the exhibition, or if you reconstruct it in an anarchic way... then maybe it will not work repressively after all'.¹⁰⁶ She defines 'being political' as 'acting in a way that reflects your politics' and thus locates the political potential of curating in every choice she makes regarding the form, structure and interpretation of an exhibition- rather than in the presentation of art objects with explicit political content or the articulation of overtly political statements.¹⁰⁷ Understanding the exhibition as a political medium means that it is possible to conceive of every aspect of curatorial decision-making as a counter-hegemonic curatorial act. Paul O'Neill, for example, sees the small act – 'overcoming, transgressing, evading, renegotiating or bypassing the dominant in some

¹⁰³ Artists have used the exhibition as a political medium since the nineteenth century but the rationalisation of the idea in contemporary curatorial practice can be traced back to curator, Bruce W. Ferguson's essay 'Exhibition Rhetorics'. Bruce W. Ferguson, 'Exhibition Rhetorics' in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (eds.), *Thinking About Exhibitions*, Routledge, London, 1995 p. 125-136

¹⁰⁴ *ibid* p. 127

¹⁰⁵ Ferguson states: 'From its architecture, which is always political, to its wall colourings which are always psychologically meaningful, to its labels which are always didactic (even, or especially in their silences, to its artistic exclusions which are always powerfully ideological and structural in their limited admissions, to its lighting which is always dramatic (and therefore an important aspect of narrativity and the staging of desire), to its security systems which are always a form of social collateral (the choice between guards and video surveillance for example), to its curatorial premises which are always professionally dogmatic, to its brochures and catalogues and videos which are always literacy specific and pedagogically directional, to its aesthetics which are always historically specific to that site of presentation rather than to an artworks individual moment of production'. *ibid*

¹⁰⁶ 'The exhibition as well, which is a device for repression a priori. But if you deconstruct the exhibition, or if you reconstruct it in an anarchic way, like Marcel Duchamp did with his objects, then maybe it will not work repressively after all'. 'A Twist of Paradox: Interview with Carolyn Christov-Barkagiev', in 'The Political Potential of Curating' *On Curating*, Issue 4, 2010, p.11.

¹⁰⁷ 'What is political in an exhibition is how long the wall label is, how the curator use the grammar in it and how high up it is placed on the wall. This is what the politics of the exhibition is all about. And once that is somehow worked upon, in the way that you work with a physiotherapist, then the rest of the life of that individual visitor may be emancipated. And then the exhibition may have made one of the exhibition goers choose differently the next time he or she is going to vote'. 'A Twist of Paradox: Interview with Carolyn Christov-Barkagiev', in 'The Political Potential of *On Curating*, Issue 4, 2010, p.10

small way' – as the most efficacious political gesture that a curator can actually realise.¹⁰⁸ It is argued by Christov-Barkiev, O'Neill and many others, that by actively changing exhibitionary practices, the curator can disrupt the hegemonic processes of the institution and, thus, counter one of the most important ideological weapons in the neoliberal 'war of position'.

There are two curatorial approaches that stand out as more holistic forms of counter-hegemonic and agonistic institutional practice, specifically because they offer a means of reclaiming the exhibition for the kind of active collective production and political critique that Vidolke sought for Manifesta VI.¹⁰⁹ Firstly, the aforementioned unique and overarching New Institutional practice developed at MACBA. And secondly, the 'project exhibition' model, proposed by artist and exhibition-maker Marion von Osten. At MACBA, Borja-Villel and Ribalta developed a means of involving the public in both politicised art-making and political discussion without sacrificing the centrality of the exhibition medium. Indeed, by directing the whole institution's practices towards counter-capitalist ends they were able to newly envisage how the exhibition could be made to serve a counter-hegemonic agenda. Their mission of reconfiguring the institution as an agonistic public space, was first materialised through the workshop *Of Direct Action Considered as One of the Fine Arts*, held in October 2000. This brought together artist collectives and social movements, around the destructive effects of neoliberal capitalism. They brought in Nas Pas Plier, Reclaim the Streets and RT Mark (now the Yes Men) to work with local groups such as Fiambrera Obrera, on media subversion and appropriation strategies. This initial experiment led to a longer running and more radical project, *Las Agencias (The Agency)*.¹¹⁰ This project was formulated in

¹⁰⁸ In his own curatorial practice he seeks to overcome the idea of the exhibition as a hegemonic singular narrative by subverting the standard way that exhibitions are produced, inviting creative producers to come together and generate work in response to each other, spontaneously, over time. 'The Politics of the Small Act: Interview with Paul O'Neill, in 'The Political Potential of Curating, *On Curating*, Issue 4, 2010, p.10.

¹⁰⁹ Von Osten sites discussions amongst leftist artists and cultural producers, united by the belief that 'something had to be done about capitalism' as the impetus behind her desire to pursue this mode of exhibition-making practice. Charlotte Barnes, 'Marion von Osten on her collaborative style and multiple roles: A Skype conversation with Marion von Osten by Charlotte Barnes' in 'On Artistic and Curatorial Authorship', *On Curating*, Issue 19. 2014. Available online at: <http://www.on-curating.org/index.php/issue-19-reader/marion-von-osten-on-her-collaborative-style-and-multiple-roles.html#.VLGxgicxD8M> (accessed 29.08.14).

¹¹⁰ This project is described in full by Jorge Ribalta in Jorge Ribalta, 'Experiments in a New Institutionality' in Jorge Ribalta and Manuel Borja-Villel (eds.), *Relational Objects: MACBA Collection 2002-2007*, MACBA Publications, Barcelona, 2010, p.234-237. Perspectives on the project from outside the institution include: Marcelo Expósito, *History Lessons: Art between Institutional Experimentation and the Politics of Social Movements*, 2009, first presented at Conferencia en el VII Simposio Internacional de Teoría sobre Arte Contemporáneo (SITAC): *Sur, sur, sur, sur...*, Centro Cultural Universitario Tlatelolco, México D.F on 30.01.2009. The revised transcript is available online at: http://marceloexposito.net/pdf/exposito_sitac_en.pdf (accessed 12.08.2014). Alba Benavent suggests that Ribalta's account is a very 'watered down version' of the heated conflicts generated by the workshops in her online article, *Las Agencias: From project to Action*, 2013. Available online: <http://www.a-desk.org/highlights/Las-agencias-from-project-to.html> (accessed 15.08.2014). Quim Gil gave a much more critical assessment of the political efficacy of the project

response to Barcelona hosting the neoliberal event par excellence, the World Bank Summit, in June 2001, and facilitated local social movements in the creation of a Counter-Summit.¹¹¹ *Las Agencias* was openly defined by MACBA as ‘an activist project’ that comprised of events, workshops and debates ‘with the objective of generating democratic public space, of recovering the public sphere... as a means of producing cultural resistance.’¹¹²

However, *Las Agencias* was complimented by two parallel exhibitions held at MACBA during summer 2001 that attempted to further materialise Mouffe’s ideas. The first was a historical survey exhibition, *Antagonismes (Antagonisms)*, which featured case studies of ‘cultural activism’ from the 1960s onwards.¹¹³ The exhibition rationale, penned by José Lebrero Stals, makes clear that the exhibition was intended to function as an explanatory essay that explored the political efficacy of art, in relation to Mouffe’s definition of ‘the political’.¹¹⁴ *Documentary Processes* was, on the other hand, an exhibition organised strategically as a form of direct action.

in his brief report for Mute Magazine, describing MACBA as deeply institutionalised. The article is available online here: <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/fashion-demonstration-pret-revolver> (accessed 15.08.2014).

¹¹¹ The World Bank Summit was cancelled in response to anti-globalisation protests in other cities such as Prague and Gothenburg in the lead up to the event, but the counter-summit still took place in June 2001 as planned. The ‘graphics agency’ produced posters, the ‘photography agency’ produced images for the various campaigns, the ‘media agency’ produced a magazine for the counter-summit, an ‘agency for public intervention’ which produced a mobile exhibition space called ‘Show Bus’ and special protesting clothes for increased visibility and safety, and finally a ‘relational agency’ which took over the running of the museum’s bar. Jorge Ribalta, ‘Experiments in a New Institutionality’ in *Jorge Ribalta* and Manuel Borja-Villel (eds.), *Relational Objects: MACBA Collection 2002-2007*, MACBA Publications, Barcelona, 2010, pp.234-237.

¹¹² Ribalta explains that the concept of agency was understood in two ways, firstly of empowering the public and giving them autonomy and secondly as a micro-institution that could mediate between the publics and the museum. For more on this project see: Jorge Ribalta, ‘Experiments in a New Institutionality’ in *Jorge Ribalta* and Manuel Borja-Villel (eds.), *Relational Objects: MACBA Collection 2002-2007*, MACBA Publications, Barcelona, 2010, pp.234-235

¹¹³ The exhibition took place between 26th July and 14th October 2001. For more information see the MACBA website: <http://www.macba.cat/en/exhibition-antagonisms> and José Lebrero Stals, *Antagonisms. Case Studies*, MACBA, 2001 available online here: http://www.macba.es/antagonismos/english/09_03.html (accessed 12.08.14).

¹¹⁴ ‘The project accepts the essential difference Chantal Mouffe rightly emphasises between two terms which are close, but still allude to practices which do not overlap. What she calls politics is the set of institutional, or even artistic, discourses and practices that help to affirm and reproduce a certain kind of order. On the other hand, there is the idea of “the political”, which corresponds to the dimension of antagonism; the distinction between friend and enemy...Mouffe shows that cultural and artistic practices can play a central role as one of the levels on which identifications and forms of identity are constituted: “One cannot make a distinction between political art and non-political art, because every form of artistic practice either contributes to the reproduction of the given common sense – and in that sense is political – or contributes to the deconstruction or critique of it.” See: José Lebrero Stals, *Antagonisms. Case Studies*, MACBA, 2001, available online here: http://www.macba.es/antagonismos/english/09_03.html (accessed 12.08.14).



Fig. 5. (Top left) *The Direct Action as one of the Fine Arts leaflet*, 2000, MACBA Collection, Study Centre, MACBA Historical Fonds. Fig. 6. (Top right) *The Direct Action as One of the Fine Arts workshop session*, Barcelona, 2000, MACBA Collection, Study Centre, MACBA Historical Fonds. Fig. 7 (Bottom left) *Tutti Bianchi's demonstration against the World Bank*, Barcelona, 24 June 2001, developed as part of *Las Agencias*, MACBA Collection, Study Centre, MACBA Historical Fonds. Fig. 8. (Bottom right) *Documentary Processes*, 13th June 2001 – 22nd July, MACBA, Barcelona, MACBA Collection, Study Centre, MACBA Historical Fonds.

According to Ribalta, it was intended to operate as 'an instrument for the counter-summit and the needs of anti-capitalist groups'.¹¹⁵ He related:

Images were used as to construct a criticism of the social consequences of neoliberal monetarist policies as a contribution to a different critical imaginary to the consensual images promoted by the institution, which served to render all conflict invisible or neutral.¹¹⁶

The clarity and openness of counter-hegemonic intent in this passage stands out in a curator-led discourse awash with ambiguous claims about the political potential of curatorial practice, but where individual curators rarely 'nail their colours to the mast'. At that moment in 2001, the whole institution – the separate exhibitions, workshops, public programme, publications and so on – were all simultaneously geared towards

¹¹⁵ Jorge Ribalta, 'Experiments in a New Institutionality' in Jorge Ribalta and Manuel Borja-Villel (eds.), *Relational Objects: MACBA Collection 2002-2007*, MACBA Publications, Barcelona, 2010, p.237.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*

the rearticulation of MACBA as an agonistic space. It is the most committed materialisation of Mouffe's ideas that I have come across.¹¹⁷

The 'project exhibition' trope emerged in the late eighties and early nineties (Martha Rosler's 'If you Lived Here...' being an early example) but has, more recently, gained prominence in the curator-led discourse as a mode of political exhibition-making that can open up the existing art institutions to DiY working practices. In spite of occasional references to 'Empire', the chief advocate of the form, Marion von Osten, disputes Hardt and Negri's proposition that it is necessary to desert the existing art institutions. Rather, she argues, along the same lines as Mouffe, that in order for the stagnated cultural left to move beyond out dated modes of critique, art institutions must be reimagined as 'spaces of negotiation and confrontation', rather than 'cynicism and flight'.¹¹⁸ She contends that the institutional art exhibition has the potential to constitute a different kind of public – a 'counter-public' capable of resisting and challenging the neoliberal hegemony. However, as standard practices and modes of production and address are so embedded, this can only be achieved by fundamentally questioning the way that exhibitions are made, who makes them, and who is permitted to speak through them. Hence, an exhibition curated by 'outsiders', within an institutional setting, can offer a space where antagonistic positions can be brought into contact with each other.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷The work that Manuel Borja-Villel and his team have done to realise the transformation of MACBA has also had a significant impact on Mouffe's own thinking, providing her with compelling examples through which she can better make the case that all public institutions including art museums can be reinvented as the agonistic spaces needed for a new radical leftist democracy through the use of counter-hegemonic strategies. In a recent article for *Recto Verso*, for example, she used MACBA to illustrate her ideas: 'Personally, I'm really interested in the role of the museum and how it can become an agonistic space... Take MACBA as an example. It's a new building designed by Richard Meier and constructed in a part of Barcelona with a bad reputation... They've evacuated the people there and now it has become a very trendy place. It's an obvious example of gentrification. When Manuel J. Borja-Villel became director of MACBA, he was very aware of this situation, so he tried to establish contact with the original population, he invited them... he introduces side-activities, organised politically challenging exhibitions, etc. It became a fantastic place, with real interaction'. Sébastien Hendrickx and Wouter Hillaert, 'The Art of Critical Art: Interview with Chantal Mouffe', *Recto Verso*, no.52, May-June 2012. Available online at: <http://www.rektoverso.be/artikel/art-critical-art> (accessed 23.08.2014).

¹¹⁸ Marion von Osten, 'In Search of the Postcapitalist Self' in *E-Flux*, Issue 17. Available online at: <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/editorial%E2%80%9494%E2%80%99Cin-search-of-the-postcapitalist-self%E2%80%99D/> (accessed 29.08.14).

¹¹⁹ Though, Von Osten makes frequent reference to Hardt and Negri in her texts – even referring to contributing participants as a 'multitude' – to signal the anti-neoliberal intent of the project. She also uses it to acknowledge and explicate the ways in which the 'project exhibition' fits easily into neoliberal flexible working models, claiming it as a mode of practice that has transformative potential, precisely because it is situated within, but understands and has an attitude to 'the modes of production of its time'. Marion von Osten, 'Another Criterion... or, What Is the Attitude of a Work in the Relations of Production of Its Time?' in *Afterall*, Issue 25, Autumn/Winter 2010. Also see her editorial entitled 'In Search of the Postcapitalist Self' in *E-Flux*, Issue 17, available online at: <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/editorial%E2%80%9494%E2%80%99Cin-search-of-the-postcapitalist-self%E2%80%99D/> accessed 29.08.14.

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Fig. 9. (Left) *Atelier Europa: A Small Post-Fordist Drama*, Kunstverein Munich, 2004 and Fig. 10. (Right) Vernon Ah Kee, *What is an Aborigine* (1999) at The 16th Sydney Biennial, *Revolutions Forms That Turn*, 2008.

For Von Osten, the project exhibition offers something different from the hegemonic practices enacted in major art institutions, through the development of new collaborative working practices that involve people outside of the institutional art world. They are generally organised by artists and other cultural producers, as opposed to professional curators. The audience is also typically involved in the production of the exhibition, helping it to develop over time. In this way, the exhibition becomes something that speaks with a collective voice, rather than a speech act of the institution – even when it is located within one. As this collective voice can also speak with a sovereignty and clear political position – in the way that a curator representing an institution cannot – it can also be harnessed to openly critique neoliberal practices. For example, the exhibition *Atelier Europe: A Small Post-Fordist Drama*, curated by Von Osten herself, brought together leftist cultural producers and theorists that have developed their own models of neoliberal critique to produce an exhibition that reflected on the role of culture in maintaining the neoliberal hegemony.¹²⁰ She thus argues that the project exhibition can take a stand against neoliberal dominance by ‘establishing a discourse – a practice that radically questions the space of art and the regime of representation linked to it’.¹²¹ The whole institution of art, as opposed to the individual art institution, is intentionally brought into question through these singular exhibition projects, and its various boundaries and hierarchies interrogated and broken down.¹²²

¹²⁰ *Atelier Europe: A Small Post-fordist Drama (An Exhibition Project and a Weekend on the Precariousness and Politicization of Knowledge and Cultural Production)*, Kunstverein Munich, 2 April 2004 - 13 June 2004. See the exhibition guide for more details, available online at: www.ateliereuropa.com/doc/atEU_guide_EN.pdf (accessed online on 28.08.14).

¹²¹ Text from introduction to *Producing Publics - Making Worlds (seminar with Marion von Osten)*. See: http://hu.transit.org/en/free_school/0/2009-04-04/seminar-w-mvo (accessed online on 28.08.14).

¹²² Because the project exhibition is particularly concerned with breaking down hierarchies between disciplines and types of creative and intellectual production it is not however a prerequisite that it must take place within an art institution, so for example *Be Creative!* was hosted in a Design museum, which according to Von Osten enabled a more creative dynamic as participants were

Together, these examples have highlighted the significant impact that the idea that curators can and *ought* to counter the neoliberal hegemony has had on curatorial practice. Curators have generally either focused on the discursive, relational and performative aspects of the institution's programme, or on changing or modifying the structural and formal properties of the exhibition medium. This suggests, however, that the political content of the exhibition has been increasingly neglected.

The political content of an exhibition is still important in counter-hegemonic projects because, as I argued in the introduction, the neoliberal hegemony has been so emphatically sustained by changing the public conception of what politics is and does. By firmly establishing the idea that all ideological thought is dangerous in the public consciousness – and creating a notion of politics as an entirely pragmatic and value-free, rational process – neoliberal ideologues suppressed alternative positions and easily dismissed them as irrelevant. In what follows, I review art exhibitions with political themes since 1989 and analyse whether this serves to further or restrict the counter-hegemonic agenda of leftist curators. I reveal an important tension between the counter-hegemonic, counter-capitalist thrust of the curator-led discourse, and the concept of politics that is articulated in and through exhibitions of political art.

1.5 The de-ideologisation of politics in exhibitions since 1989

In spite of the number of curators seeking to frame their practice through radical leftist political discourse, since 1989 there has not been a single exhibition held at a major public art institution that explicitly deals with the influence of leftist politics on artistic practice.¹²³ More importantly, the very idea of 'left' and 'right' politics has been excluded from the discourses articulated through exhibitions addressing political themes of any kind. Even those that have been curated from a leftist position, or contain artworks produced solely by artists that have been influenced by left-wing ideologies, make no reference to the terms 'left' and 'right' within the exhibition texts. Indeed, in the vast majority of these exhibitions, the concept of politics that is

liberated by not having to produce works of 'art' and were instead able to produce work that interpreted the core issue in whatever way they deemed most efficacious.

¹²³ This is the case despite there being a significant increase, during the same period, in such institutions hosting exhibitions exploring the relationship between art and politics through other thematic devices and concepts.

articulated is de-ideologised. Instead, it is the ethico-political values, most associated with neoliberal ideology, that are advocated.

One of the first notable changes in the content of exhibitions of visual art, after 1989, was the sudden influx of 'propaganda art'. In addition to retrospective survey exhibitions such as *Art and Power - Europe Under the Dictators 1930-1945*, (Hayward Gallery, 1996), there was a focus on bringing Socialist Realist and Communist art into public view, through exhibitions such as *Stalin's Choice: Soviet Socialist Realism* (Institute for Contemporary Art and P.S.1, New York, 1993); *Agitation Toward Happiness – Soviet Art in the Stalin Era* (Documenta-Halle, Kassel, 1993) and *Dream Factory Communism: The Visual Culture of the Stalinist Era*, (Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, 2003-04).¹²⁴ This was primarily driven by leftist curators hoping to 'contribute to the regaining of a common memory'.¹²⁵ The curators of *Art and Power*, for example, identified that the art of the 1930s, the 'age of totalitarianism', had been 'tabooed, disregarded, or else looked at only from specialised aspects', and artwork produced in the service of politics classified as 'not art'.¹²⁶ Hans-Jörg Czech, curator of the later *Art and Propaganda: Clash of Nations 1930-1945* (Deutsches Historisches Museum, 2007), aimed to ensure that 'Nazi art' was 'historically decoded' in order to contribute to the 'education and immunisation' of the general public, in terms of National Socialist symbolism.

¹²⁴ *Agitation Toward Happiness* is particularly important in that it was co-organised by the Documenta archive and the Moscow State Museum. This was emblematic of the new relationship that became possible between cultural institutions of the former Eastern Bloc and the West after 1989. But also because it was held in the newly built Documenta-Halle itself, given that the original purpose and political rationality of Documenta was to provide the post-war German public with a view of Western modernism that had been denied them during the Nazi regime, and that Documenta had come to be seen as an instrumentalist tool for propagating the liberal and capitalist values of the West over the East. *Agitation Toward Happiness: Soviet Art in the Stalin Era* (Agitation zum Gluck: Sowjetische Kunst der Stalinzeit), Documenta-Halle, Kassel, 1993. For more information see the catalogue: H Gassner, I Schleier and K. Stengel (eds), *Agitation zum Gluck. Sowjetische Kunst der Stalinzeit*, exhibition catalogue, Bremen 1994. See: http://www.wintershall-service.de/kunstzone/agitation_glueck/agitation_glueck_ausstellung_raum1_e.htm (accessed 12.04.2011). For a review see http://arsnova.artinfo.ru/sotzrealism/margarita_tupitsyn.htm (accessed 12.04.2011). *Stalin's Choice: Soviet Socialist Realism 1932-1956*: The Institute for Contemporary Art, P.S.1 Museum, New York, November 21, 1993-February 27, 1994. For a review see: <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/12/10/arts/review-art-stalin-s-painters-in-service-of-the-sacred.html> (accessed 14.04.2011). *Dream Factory Communism: The Visual Culture of the Stalinist Era*, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, 24 September 2003 until 4 January 2004 http://www.schirn-kunsthalle.de/en/Exhibition_16.html (accessed 28.04.2011).

¹²⁵ Quote from: Dawn Ades, *Art and power : Europe under the dictators 1930-45 : the XXIII Council of Europe exhibition*. London, Hayward Gallery, 1995. Later exhibitions of 'propaganda art' held at major art institutions have included the trio of LACMA exhibitions – their recreation of the infamous Nazi organised exhibition *Entartete Kunst, Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany, German and Austrian Posters: War, Revolution, Protest* (2005) and *Art of Two Germanys/Cold War Cultures* (2009) – and *Cold War Modern: Design 1945-1970* (2008-2009) at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. There have also been a significant number of exhibitions focussed on specific aspects of propaganda in smaller institutions, in particular the specialist Wolfsonian Institute in Miami, Florida, USA.

¹²⁶ *Art and Power* was curated and selected by Professor Dawn Ades of the University of Essex; David Elliott, Director of the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford; Professor Tim Benton, Dean of the Arts Faculty of the Open University; Dr Iain Boyd Whyte, Director of the Centre for Architectural History at the University of Edinburgh; Lutz Becker, artist and film-maker and Simonetta Fraquelli, a historian of 20th century Italian Art. This process of 'regaining memory' had already begun in the early nineties with the exhibitions of Socialist Realist art held in the West and was taken to the extreme in 1991, when the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) exhibited an almost complete restaging of the Nazi exhibition, *Entartete Kunst, Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*.

However, these exhibitions only served to reinforce the idea that liberal democracy was the only civilised form of politics. In their search for a totalitarian typology of art, the curators stressed the commonalities, rather than the differences, between distinct political ideologies. This forced the left and the right into a single category that distanced ‘post-ideological’ Europe from its cultural past, by branding all ideological thought as monolithic and dangerous.¹²⁷ These exhibitions also reinforced the idea that any art produced in non-democratic contexts is ‘propaganda’, rather than simply art – reducing its ideological pull and inferring that ‘fine art’ can only be produced in liberal democracies. In *Art and Power*, for example, propaganda art was something produced by the ‘other’ – by totalitarian regimes in wartime: it did not consider propaganda in Britain in the same period.¹²⁸

As historian Marla Stone argued, *Art and Power* ‘bespoke a nervous desire to construct a cordon sanitaire around the art of fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism, to declare it the relics of a bygone era and to appropriate the oppositional, antifascist art which faces it as the “true” European tradition’.¹²⁹ This is emblematic of a drive to counter any ideological impact that the works might have on the viewer, by establishing a counter-narrative of ‘good’ oppositional art, produced unofficially in non-democratic regimes. The ideological neutralisation of Socialist Realist works, for example, was helped by the fact that art institutions in the West had already begun to establish a counter-narrative through exhibitions of non-conformist work, by Soviet artists, that satirised the official works. In New York there was an already established ‘Sots Art’ scene, kick-started by Margarita Tupitsyn’s ‘Sots Art’ exhibition (New Museum, New York, 1986).¹³⁰ Even in the broader *Stalin’s Choice and Dream Factory Communism*, there was an appended section, which included the work of ‘sots art’ artists.¹³¹ In the case of Soviet Socialist

¹²⁷ Marla Stone, Review: *Art and Power*, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. Vol. 55, No. 4, December 1996.

¹²⁸ This was in spite of the fact that the British propaganda programmes greatly influenced both Goebbels and Hitler

¹²⁹ Marla Stone, Review: *Art and Power*, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. Vol. 55, No. 4, December 1996.

¹³⁰ exhibition, entitled *Monumental Propaganda* (1993), circulated by Independent Curators Incorporated, New York, and exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Moscow and several venues in America, including The Smithsonian International Gallery. With *Monumental Propaganda*, Komar and Melamid invited artists to contribute proposals, which provided artistic solutions as to what to do with the wealth of propagandistic monuments of Marx, Lenin and Stalin, which are being dismantled across the former Soviet Union. For more information see: Komar and Melamid’s website: <http://www.komarandmelamid.org/chronology.html> (accessed 11.09.2010). For images see the New Museum website:

http://archive.newmuseum.org/index.php/Detail/Occurrence/Show/occurrence_id/130 (accessed 11.09.2010).

This kind of art was particularly championed by the Ronald Feldman Gallery. Komar and Melamid, also instigated a travelling

¹³¹ For a review of the exhibition see: Robert Hughes, *Icons of Stalinism*, (Soviet Socialist realism, Institute for Contemporary Art, New York, New York), Time, 1994, Accessible online at: http://arsnova.artinfo.ru/sotzrealism/robert_hughes.htm (accessed 01.11.2010).

Realism, an explicitly leftist art form was quickly accommodated into the Western art institutions, only to be discredited as 'propaganda' or 'kitsch'. These exhibitions thus served to reinforce the neoliberal hegemony by reducing distinct ideologies through a singular narrative of good democratic versus bad totalitarian art, and by positioning liberal democracy as the only viable option.

The advent of the European Union created a need for a pan-European identity that could bring together Western and former Eastern bloc countries. As the Union is essentially a mechanism for consolidating neoliberalism across Europe, this identity was based around the core neoliberal ethico-political values of individualism and freedom of expression.¹³² Several official EU art exhibitions were organised to promote European unity, such as *The Image of Europe* (European Commission, Brussels, 2004), which toured to the Haus der Kunst Munich.¹³³ However, these same values were also articulated by exhibitions that reflected on the politics of the new post-wall Europe, produced by curators with the counter-hegemonic agenda of introducing Central and Eastern European art into Western institutions. These exhibitions still served to reinforce the neoliberal hegemony, by stressing the similarities between Eastern and Western European culture and politics – creating a vision of a united Europe with common values, where individual liberty and freedom of expression are prioritised above all else.¹³⁴ *After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe* (Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 1999-2000), for example, was typical of Post-Communist displays of former Soviet Bloc art in its focus on individuality, identity and cultural commonality.¹³⁵

Boris Groys blames this focus on individuality and subjectivity in recent exhibitions of Central and Eastern European art, on the inability of Western curators to imagine an alternative to the Western notion of contemporary artistic practice as an individualistic

¹³² For a critical appraisal of the enactment of neoliberal policies within the EU see: Christoph Hermann, 'Neoliberalism in the European Union', *Studies in Political Economy*, Vol. 79, 2007.

¹³³ For a thoughtful and thorough analysis of the exhibition in terms of supranational branding and political objectives see: Riitta Oittinen, *Cosmopolitan versus Nationalist Visions: Rem Koolhaas' exhibition 'The Image of Europe* in Matthew Rampley (ed.), *Heritage, Ideology, and Identity in Central and Eastern Europe: Contested Pasts, Contested Presents*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2012, pp 175-190.

¹³⁴ One example is *The New Europe: Culture of Mixing and Politics of Representation*, Generali Foundation, Vienna, January – April 2004. This exhibition emphasised the connections between artists from both the former East and West in the 'New Europe' and highlighted the political uniformity. For more information see <http://foundation.generali.at/en/info/archive/2006-2004/exhibitions/the-new-europe-culture-of-mixing-and-politics-of-representation.html> accessed 14.12.2011

¹³⁵ *After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 16 October 1999 to 16 January 2000.

enterprise produced for a competitive art market. Groys has criticised Western art institutions for neglecting to show Eastern European and Central art for what they are – fundamentally collective activities – and, instead, presenting work as individual projects.¹³⁶ Groys argues that the most distinguishing feature of Eastern and Central European art, as a distinct typology, is its collective character that stems directly from the Communist ideology that pervaded during the majority of the twentieth century.¹³⁷ He contends that in Eastern Europe, where, until recently, there was no art market, the idea of collective work *is* the cultural norm that has been established through the existence of a communist society and a socialist economy based on collectivist values.¹³⁸ However, in the West, these acts of collective production are not presented as political, as they are not seen to be reacting against an official position, and are, instead, de-ideologised, or characterised, as nostalgic, backwards and failed – as titles such as, *Ostalgia* and *Promises of the Past*, testify.¹³⁹

One example is *Aspects/Positions: Fifty Years of Art in Central Europe, 1949-1999*, (Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna, 1999), through which curator Lóránd Hegyi aimed to provide a ‘scientific-historical’ context by which to examine how artists in Central Europe positioned themselves in relation to Eastern and Western ideology. The work of unofficial artists in former Communist Central European countries was not presented according to its relationship to lived Socialism or leftist values, but was, instead, connected to the professed individualism of the Western European avant-garde. As Groys argues, the aim was to stress the common European continuity, amongst artists, that prevailed *in spite of* Communist rule.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, Hegyi explicitly stated, in the catalogue, that he hoped the exhibition could contribute to the consignment of ideological politics to the past, and to the formation of an ‘objective modern historical consciousness, untainted by emotion of ideology’.¹⁴¹ However, Nancy Jachec, reviewing the exhibition, highlighted the ideologically-driven duplicity of this

¹³⁶ See: Boris Groys, Back to the Future, *Third Text*, Vol. 17, Issue 4, 2003, p. 323–331.

¹³⁷ *ibid.*

¹³⁸ Although there are many collectives and artists groups operating in the West, these groups are reacting against the cultural and institutional norms that are dictated by the existence of an art market which requires the artist to operate as a ‘free-entrepreneur’, a loan figure with a commodifiable name and identity brokered on the basis of individual genius that can be set apart from others. Whereas, even after the fall of Communism, the new generations of artists emerging in Eastern European countries are still influenced by the historical collective memory of socialism that remains alien to Western artists.

¹³⁹ *Promises of the Past* at Centre Pompidou, Paris, April - July 2010 and *Ostalgia*, July 14–September 25, 2011, New Museum, New York. See: <http://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/view/ostalgia> (accessed 02.03.2013).

¹⁴⁰ See: Boris Groys, Back to the Future, *Third Text*, Vol. 17, Issue 4, 2003, p. 323–331.

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Nancy Jachec, *Aspects/positions*, *Third Text*, 2001, p. 36.

stance. She argued that the type of individualised, supposedly ‘post-ideological’, pragmatic politics, articulated by the exhibition, was entirely consistent with the distinct ideology of neo-liberalism. She contended that the exhibition was, in fact, strategically utilised to promote the values of pragmatism, and individualism, as the basis of a common European identity that could unite East and West unproblematically, as a neoliberal Union.¹⁴²

This universalising impulse has even been argued, by some leftist critics, to further the process of globalisation, and the expansion of neoliberal capitalism, through the assimilation of different cultures – according to solely Western criteria. Such criticism has been extended, for example, to exhibitions such as *Les Magiciens de la Terre*. Whilst, exhibitions that focused on identity politics and notions of ‘otherness’ were, in any case, consistent with the promotion of multiculturalism and the idea of ‘tolerance’ that was already prevalent in neoliberal contexts. Chin Tao Wu, writing for the *New Left Review*, has further claimed that the new ‘global’ or ‘globalist’ rhetoric, articulated through contemporary biennials, has done nothing to displace or challenge entrenched cultural hierarchies.¹⁴³ For Wu, ‘despite its decolonizing and democratic claims’, the biennial has ‘proved still to embody the traditional power structures of the contemporary Western art world; the only difference being that ‘Western’ has quietly been replaced by a new buzzword, ‘global’.¹⁴⁴

Even where leftist curators sought to use their exhibition-making as a platform to activate new discourses, and relationships that could actively counter exploitation and inequality beyond the museum, they tended to globalise and homogenise politics; presenting it as something that had transcended the categories of left and right. Though, for example, the core issues, that Documenta 11 addressed, should be understood as central to debates in leftist politics at that time, they were not framed around a left/right political divide, but around the issue of democracy as a global concern, and no explicit reference to leftist politics was made in the texts around the exhibition. With its totalising worldview, and alignment with post-Marxist positions, it

¹⁴² Nancy Jachec, *Aspects/positions*, Third Text, 2001, p. 30.

¹⁴³ Chin Tao Wu, *Biennials Without Borders*, *New Left Review*, May-June 2009. Available online at: <http://newleftreview.org/II/57/chin-tao-wu-biennials-without-borders> (accessed 14.02.2011).

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*

was criticised for ignoring the importance of social class to the neoliberal project for the sake of a 'one-world, one-issue' approach. Angela Dimitrakaki thus referred to the 'stubbornly post-colonial perspective', adopted by Enwezor as being hegemonic in its marginalisation of other kinds of radical leftist politics – adjudging it a 'defeat for left politics in general'.¹⁴⁵

Retrospective survey exhibitions, of political art, have also tended to articulate a post-ideological concept (of politics) that affirms the neoliberal 'no alternative' mantra, and denies the relevance of 'left-right' politics. In *Face à l'histoire* (Pompidou Centre, Paris, 1997), for example – which surveyed how artists have interpreted major political events in the twentieth century – the curators sought to continually contextualise the artwork by exhibiting archival historical material alongside.¹⁴⁶ However, as critic Adrian Rifkin pointed out, despite this emphasis on political context, it failed to make any distinction between political ideologies or left and right politics – collapsing them into a single heterogeneous category by arranging works around dates alone and by casually placing together issues of *Paris Match* and *AIZ*. Rifkin thus accused the curators of a 'willful, end-of-ideology confusion of political or economic difference' and of a 'refusal to allow a distinction between left and right'.¹⁴⁷ *Protest and Survive* (Whitechapel Gallery, London, 2000), a survey show of 'radical' political art – with a title derived from a slogan by the Marxist cultural historian E.P. Thompson – might be presumed to make considerable reference to leftist politics, within its texts.¹⁴⁸ Yet, although the show's title promised a leftist activist agenda, the curators only aimed to protest 'for the survival of ideas', and it was thus criticised for depoliticising art and for museologising protest.¹⁴⁹ These examples are the rule, not the exception, and underline how rare it is – under the neoliberal hegemony – for an institutional exhibition to articulate an ideological concept of politics defined in terms of 'left' and 'right'. In survey shows, in particular, the politics must be neutralised, balanced and impartial, or based on ambiguous political concepts like 'peace' or 'revolution'.

¹⁴⁵ Angela Dimitrakaki, 'Art and politics continued: avant-garde, resistance and the multitude in Documenta 11', *Historical Materialism: Research in Critical Marxist Theory*, 11, (3), 2003, pp. 153-176,

¹⁴⁶ For information about the exhibition in French see:

http://www.centrepompidou.fr/media/imgcoll/Collection/DOC/M5050/M5050_A/M5050_ARCV001_DP-2003037.pdf accessed 05/05/13

¹⁴⁷ Adrian Rifkin, *Face à l'histoire*, Centre Pompidou, April 1997, Vol. 35, No. 8

¹⁴⁸ The phrase was adopted by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the 1980's when the Thatcher government published a pamphlet called 'Protect and Survive' advising what to do in the event of a nuclear attack.

¹⁴⁹ Matthew Higgs and Paul Noble (eds.), *Protest and Survive*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 2010

Even Charles Esche's *Forms of Resistance: Artists and the Desire for Social Change 1871 to the Present*, (Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, 2008), which was organized around key leftist revolutionary moments, denied the relevance of left-right politics and reinforced neoliberal conceptions of present-day politics.¹⁵⁰ Although it was assumed by many critics, including Hal Foster, to be a mediation on 'the relations between modernist art and leftist politics', the words 'right' and 'left' were never used in the exhibition concept, or in the wall texts.¹⁵¹ This refusal to acknowledge the existence of the political left is made even more conspicuous by the fact that every one of the included artists was positioned firmly on the left – from the leftist anarchism of Gustave Courbet to the Socialist Democrats William Morris and Walter Crane; from the Communism of John Heartfield to the Black Marxism of Emory Douglas and the Marxist-Feminism of Martha Rosler. The specific and distinct ideologies of left politics, are therefore, replaced by a single category of resistance.

Though Esche is generally perceived as a 'leftist curator', he situates his own politics as being 'beyond left and right'. In one article for the online journal *Afterall Online*, he states that he 'would wish that we abandoned the left as the historic category born in the French Revolution and instead began the task of building a planet-wide political movement'.¹⁵² Indicating that he believes that the categories of 'left' and 'right' are no longer relevant to contemporary politics, he states:

The post-1945 'natural' order that infused much economic debate and the post-1968 order that did the same for social values have fallen apart. They no longer command a consensus and certainly offer no vision of the future worth rallying for.¹⁵³

Instead he calls for a new global movement, removed from nation-state boundaries, that is *not* anti-capitalist, but *would* seek to regulate capital, would redistribute income

¹⁵⁰ The curatorial team, which was also comprised of Will Bradley and Phillip van den Bossche, intended to examine how radical transformations in the form of artworks could also make social and political transformations possible.

¹⁵¹ Hal Foster, *Forms of Resistance: Review*, *Art Forum*, January 2008, p. 272 or available to view online at: http://transform.eicp.net/Actions/exhibitions/formsofresistance/Actions/exhibitions/resistance_art/#redir (accessed 04/01/2013).

¹⁵² He also states in the same article: 'From a position that might consider itself 'Dutch leftist', in the vague sense of being concerned about opportunity, fairness and tolerance, there hasn't been much effective critique of the economic and social policy of this neoliberal government. I suspect that is because, speaking from that position, there isn't much to say. The kind of well-meaning social democracy that wanted to make the world 'better' and could do it from a safe European home is simply not sustainable. It's core beliefs – in a united Western Europe, in a homogenous national society of engaged citizens, in cultural toleration and political consensus – just don't seem to press anyone's buttons anymore.' See: Charles Esche, *Do Not Go Gentle...*, *Afterall Online*, published 31.08.2011 <http://www.afterall.org/online/do-not-go-gentle> (accessed 05/05/2013).

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

in order to improve education across the globe, would create new publically funded global cultural institutions (biennials?) and would seek to protect people's individual identities or cultures.¹⁵⁴ Aside from the emphasis on regulation, it is difficult to see how this differs from the neoliberal-lite policies of left-centrist parties such as New Labour or the US Democrats. Esche's pessimistic and endist appraisal of leftist politics was thus reflected in the framing and selection of the exhibition, leading Hal Foster to view the exhibition as essentially 'a vale of tears, a history of failure', that signifies the impotence of both contemporary leftist politics and political art.¹⁵⁵

Similarly, it would seem fair to presume that the network that Esche was so heavily involved in developing (L'Internationale) – with a name taken from an international Socialist and Communist anthem – would be the group that could declare an openly leftist and anti-neo-liberal collective agenda. However, although this may indeed be their common political position, they never make this explicit. The most overt political statements are missing from the press releases and website and are, instead, buried in the collectively penned 'prologue' document to the first L'Internationale publication.¹⁵⁶

The only exhibitions, during the period, that examined specific ideological positions were: *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* (ZKM Museum of Contemporary Art, 2005) and *Populism: Artists Reflect This Contemporary Political and Cultural Phenomenon* (various venues across Europe, 2005). Like the other exhibitions we have discussed, in *Making Things Public*, there was no reference to left/right politics, or to any ideologies outside of representative democracy. Indeed, the principle objective of the exhibition – its core mission – was to open up a post-ideological, pragmatic, and representative democratic politics, based not on the values of left and right, but instead on a pure materialism dictated by things – in accordance with

¹⁵⁴ He states: That movement would need to discipline and control global capital but not destroy it; it would need to express a desire for global cultural institutions and find ways to construct them with public money across the continents; it would need to encourage the transfer of wealth from rich to poor to raise world educational standards at levels from primary school to university; it would need to keep the nation-state in check but encourage hugely diverse and hybrid cultural identities. *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Hal Foster, *Forms of Resistance: Review*, *Art Forum* January 2008, p. 272 or available to view online at: http://transform.eipcp.net/Actions/exhibitions/formsofresistance/Actions/exhibitions/resistance_art/#redir (accessed 04/01/2013).

¹⁵⁶ In this prologue they blame neoliberal economics for decimating the cultural and political dimensions of European society and align their 'confederation' to the international socialist movement: 'we have decided for the tradition of internationalism represented by the older struggles of worker's unions and intellectuals for international solidarity and fellowship'. Z. Badovinac, B. De Baere, C. Esche, B. Marí, G. Schöllhammer, 'Prologue' in *L'Internationale, Post-War Avant-Gardes. Between 1957 and 1986*, 2012, pp. 30-33. I also discussed the consortium in conversation with Juan Cruz, Director Art and Design Academy, in May 2013

Latour's theory of Dingpolitik. As Latour stated:

There is no overarching party line in the show, even though what we are trying to do is very clear. The exhibition is more or less an opportunity to share my views about modernism... We are trying to steer the debate in a slightly different direction, one that is very inspired by the American tradition of Pragmatism.¹⁵⁷

Latour argues that it is necessary to move beyond the ideas of 'left and right' and re-explore the pragmatist liberal politics of John Dewey and Walter Lippmann, based on experimentation rather than ideology, in a contemporary context.¹⁵⁸ The exhibition, therefore, investigated the possibilities of pragmatic politics by asking what would happen if politics were, rather than being dictated by ideology, made to respond to each new issue as it is raised or disputed. However, this approach fails to recognise that pragmatism is still a political ideology in itself. And, as Anthony Iles argued, the exhibition's advocacy of pragmatism over ideology and, representative over direct democracy, accepts and propagates the neoliberal rhetoric of 'no alternative' – leaving little room for imagining any radical alternatives from either the left or the right.¹⁵⁹

Although *Populism* did engage with left/right politics in the discourses surrounding the exhibition, this was not reflected in the exhibition itself. The focus of the exhibition was the growth of 'Populism' and its 'post-political' blending of neoliberalism and welfare statism. It was organised by NIFCA (The Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art) and curated by Lars Bang Larsen, Christina Ricupero and Nicolaus Schaufhausen. Like Documenta 11, it was imagined as a multi-disciplinary and multi-platform research project, comprised of an exhibition project in four different European cities – Vilnius, Oslo, Amsterdam and Frankfurt – and an extensive critical reader.¹⁶⁰ The aim of the curators was to use populist art to demonstrate their concerns about the populist phenomenon, without resorting to an elitist and externalised critique that would position the contemporary art world as separate and superior. However, the curators

¹⁵⁷ Maria J. Prieto and Elise S. Youn, *Interview with Bruno Latour: Decoding the Collective Experiment*, Agglutinations.com, 05.07.2004. No longer available online there, but is now available via Academia.edu here: http://www.academia.edu/1604522/Interview_with_Bruno_Latour_Debriefing_the_Collective_Experiment (accessed 13/05/13).

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Anthony Iles, *Remnants of Democracy*, Mute, Thursday, 23 March, 2006. Available online: <http://www.metamute.org/en/Remnants-of-Democracy> (Accessed 13/05/13).

¹⁶⁰ *The Populism Reader* provided the theoretical grounding for the exhibition through contributions from political philosophers such as Ernesto Laclau and Dieter Lesage. Cristina Ricupero, Lars Bang Larsen, Nicolaus Schaufhausen (eds.), *The Populism Reader*, Lukas and Sternberg, New York, 2005.

were criticised for failing to make this critique present in the exhibition itself, and for leaving the populist art to speak for itself. So, for example, Michael Gibbs noted that ‘the artists in ‘Populism’ seem resigned to passivity, permanently exiled to a position of ironic commentary or a futile pursuit of beauty’ and described the art as having a superficial engagement with politics that smacked of the ‘Populism’ that the exhibition was intended to critique.¹⁶¹ The use of populist art to critique populism, as a political form, failed, as the art only articulated concepts that mirrored the dissolution of ‘left’ and ‘right’ in contemporary political discourse.

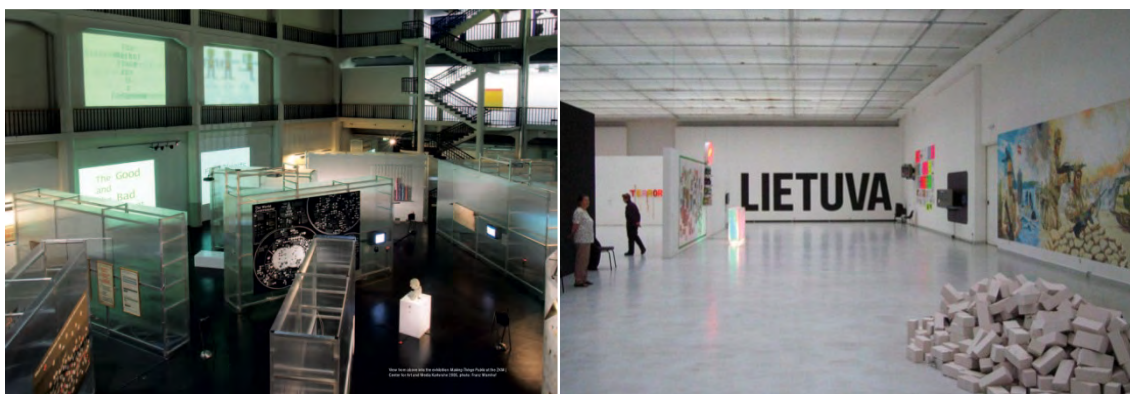


Fig. 11 (Left). Installation View of *Making Things Public* at the ZKM, Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, 2005 © ZKM / Karlsruhe, photo: Franz Wamhof. Fig. 12 (Right). Installation view of *Populism: Artists Reflect This Contemporary Political and Cultural Phenomenon*, Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, 2005. Copyright is of the Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius.

1.6 Conclusion

Art exhibitions are, thus, cumulatively mirroring contemporary post-1989 political discourse. They, too, have an emphasis on pragmatism, rather than ideology; on representative democracy and liberal values. They forcefully ignore the concept of ‘left’ and ‘right’. This is important from an art historical perspective, as it distorts the way people understand the decisions that artists make, and why artists make, disseminate and display their work in the way that they do. From a political perspective, it is even more important, as visual art exhibitions are significant sites of meaning production, and the way that they frame ‘the political’ impacts on the way people understand their own political agency, and their ability to shape or become part of this discourse.

Although it could be argued that curators and institutions must seek to represent the contemporary reality that they find themselves in, it is important to question whose

¹⁶¹ Michael Gibbs, ‘Populism Review’, *Art Monthly*, Issue 237, June 2005, p. 23.

reality these exhibitions are representing. Do we really want our art institutions to be replicating the hegemonic concept that there is no alternative to the dominant neoliberal economic model? There are, after all, alternatives already in existence –in Latin America, in particular. By failing to acknowledge the existence of, or distinction between, left-right political positions, institutions are excluding the framework that the vast majority of people across the world use to determine and understand their own political views. This can only alienate people from participating in political discourse. Rather than presenting the counter-hegemonic challenge that their rhetoric might suggest, the curators of these exhibitions are complicit in furthering the ideas and the form of consensus, ‘no alternative’ politics that sustain neoliberalism as the dominant ideology.

2. Problematizing ‘Counter-Hegemonic Curating from Within’ and the Concept of the Exhibition as Agonistic Public Space

Since 1989, the curator-led discourse has been dominated by two ideas, theorised by Chantal Mouffe. Firstly, that it is possible to make a productive contribution to challenging the neoliberal hegemony, by developing a counter-hegemonic curatorial practice within existing art institutions. And secondly, that the institutional art exhibition can be reinvented as a space for the development of a new form of radical, ‘agonistic’, democratic politics. Despite their prevalence, these ideas have yet to be subject to any in-depth critique.¹ The specific examples that Chantal Mouffe offers, of effective counter-hegemonic curatorial practice, were all brought about by strong-minded Directors of institutions (such as Manuel Borja Vilel at MACBA), who were already within a position of power that enabled them to change the direction of the whole institution. However, it is evident that there is also a widespread belief that the independent, or guest curator, has the political agency to tackle the hegemony of the host institution that they work within – through their curation of singular exhibition projects.² In this chapter, I ‘think with Mouffe against Mouffe’. I use her theoretical frameworks of ‘counter-hegemonic critique’, ‘agonistic pluralism’ and ‘articulation’ to critique strategies enacted by curators in five key exhibitions. However, in doing this, I thereby reveal tensions and contradictions in her affirmative positioning of the existing art institutions, in the furthering of the radical democratic project.

In this chapter, I extrapolate from my analyses of five exhibitions; the 50th Venice Biennial: *Dreams and Conflicts: The Dictatorship of the Viewer, Utopia Station*, which originally took place within that Biennial, the 11th Istanbul Biennial: *What Keeps Mankind Alive*, and the 28th and 29th editions of the Sao Paulo Bienal (I examined these

¹ There is practically no direct criticism of the idea of counter-hegemonic curating from within or agonistic practice in the contemporary curatorial discourse. There are, however, a few critical appraisals of Mouffe’s ideas in relation to art practice more generally. See, for example, Art historian, Grant Kester’s, 2012 *E-Flux* article: ‘The Sound of Breaking Glass, Part II: Agonism and the Taming of Dissent’, *E-Flux*, Issue 31, January, 2012. Available online at: <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/the-sound-of-breaking-glass-part-ii-agonism-and-the-taming-of-dissent/> (accessed 25.10.2014). Or Yannis Stavrakakis, ‘Challenges of Re-politicisation’, *Third Text*, 26:5, 2012, pp. 551-565.

² It must be acknowledged that there is strength in this argument. As outsiders, guest curators, at least theoretically, have the distanced perspective to challenge each institution that they work with to change their set ways of doing things and also possess the autonomy needed to act as an antagonistic force that can stimulate thinking beyond institutional limits in the materialisation of single exhibition projects. Indeed, the relatively new phenomenon of independent nomadic curators that exist outside of institutional frameworks, but engage in discourse and practice with them, has developed from the idea that they are free from the internal power structures of institutions and can therefore operate on a different level, with more freedom and ability to contest and challenge the dominant way of doing things in that institution. In short, they should in theory, be able to open up new forms of practices in the institution in which they are temporarily operating, by examining the way things are done, challenging the fact that they have to be done that way, and therefore opening up new courses of action and approaches.

together, as the latter was, essentially, a reaction to, and extension of, the strategies enacted in the former). I have selected these exhibitions because, firstly— like the exhibition I was tasked to produce at Tate Liverpool— they are all conceptually focussed on the relationship between art and politics.³ Secondly, they all attempt to actualise Chantal Mouffe’s concepts of counter-hegemonic and agonistic practice, in different ways. And finally, because they are all singular exhibition projects produced by independent guest curators.

I introduce the term ‘the antagonistic guest’ to refer to the concept of the guest curator as a counter-hegemonic agent, capable of unsettling entrenched practices and forcing institutional change. Although this specific term has not previously been used, the general notion of the guest curator intervening, to destabilise the established hierarchies and conventions of institutional practice, is firmly established in contemporary curatorial discourse. Yet, there is little acknowledgement that operating as a ‘guest’ in a host institution has a completely different power dynamic – and brings with it a whole different set of challenges and questions – from New Institutional practice. Moreover, it is questionable whether curators, in these positions, can really think beyond the existing discourses and embedded practices of the world in which they have been working. As I was attempting to intervene through a guest/host dynamic at Tate Liverpool, it was important to use an analysis of these exhibitions to interrogate whether guest curators can have the necessary knowledge of the institutional framework in which they are working, the agency, or the power to bring about institutional change. Although my research project is a collaboration with a public art museum, my analyses are all drawn from exhibitions curated by guest curators working with established Biennials, because the precedents in art museums are comparatively rare. Nonetheless, as I demonstrated in chapter one, the forms of practice, outlined here, have begun to feed into, and influence, exhibition-making in art museums. It is, therefore, important to recognise that there are differences between these specific institutional contexts, and to question how this might impact on the ability of the ‘antagonistic guest’ to implement change.

³ They do not all directly reference Mouffe, but it is evident in the curator’s framing of the exhibition that the strategies they have developed have been influenced by her work.

In all of the exhibitions analysed here, the curators have experimented with the structures and practices of exhibition-making, in an attempt to empower the viewer. They have also aimed to provide a democratic public space where a different type of politics can be enacted; an 'agonistic' politics that foments dissensus and stimulates peoples' political passions and critical capacities. In setting out the different strategies that each curator has employed, in an attempt to realise these aims, it becomes clear just how far Mouffe's post-structuralist framework has informed their work.

Mouffe, however, offers three very specific criteria for effective counter-hegemonic critique. Firstly, she stipulates that the 'political antagonist' (in this case the curator) properly understands the structural power relations and various hegemonic forces at work within the specific institution in which they are going to intervene. Secondly, that any disarticulation (the unfixing of moments that may appear stable, or practices that may appear given) is accompanied by a moment of rearticulation (bringing the original elements back together in a different way to create new meaning and new alternative discourses). Finally, she argues that their own counter-hegemonic struggle must be linked up with activist groups, political parties and trade unions in a 'chain of equivalence'.⁴ It is, thus, important to critically examine these curatorial strategies in relation to these specific conditions.

Mouffe also clearly stipulates that if art exhibitions are to provide an 'agonistic public space', they must be free from commercial interests, genuinely accessible to all, and also provide a common symbolic framework, where conflicting or antagonistic political positions can come into contact with each other. It is, therefore, equally important to examine, closely, whether the institutions – in which the exhibitions are located – can offer such a space. Moreover, Mouffe's 'agonism' insists on the need to both recognise and draw upon the 'affective dimension' of politics, in order to mobilise people towards radical democratic – as opposed to extremist or authoritarian forms of collective political action.⁵ Her advocacy of 'affective' strategies that can stimulate

⁴Chantal Mouffe, *Critique as counter-Hegemonic Intervention*, EIPCP, April 2008. Available online here: <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0808/mouffe/en> (accessed 08/02/2013). Also see: Chantal Mouffe, 'Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces', *Art and Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, Volume 1, Number 2, Summer 2007. Accessible here: www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/mouffe.html. (accessed 08/02/2013).

⁵ Mouffe makes this point in the majority of her recent publications. For example, she states that: 'By limiting themselves to calls for reason, moderation and consensus, democratic parties display their lack of understanding of the workings of political logic. They do not understand the need to counter right-wing populism by mobilising affects and passions towards democratic ends. They do not grasp that democratic politics needs to have a real purchase on people's desires and fantasies and that, instead of opposing interests to sentiments and reason to passions, it should offer forms of identifications which challenge those promoted by the

peoples' political 'passions' is, thus, considered in relation to the political efficacy of the installation, and the interpretation models employed.

I argue that the recurrence of strategies that privilege discourse over visual art objects (*Utopia Station* and 28th *Sao Paulo Bienal*), or focus on subverting the authorial position of the curator by disarticulating the formal structure of the exhibition (*Dreams and Conflict* and 29th *Sao Paulo Bienal*), have been influenced by Mouffe's theoretical framework. I use these analyses to unpick the idea that this negation of authorship is a means of empowering the individual viewer, and to show that these deconstructive approaches are based on a too literal understanding of the exhibition as a lisible text that misunderstands the way in which exhibitions communicate. I also argue that Mouffe grossly underestimates just how entangled the practices of such institutions are with neoliberal ideology and market forces; and how far embedded institutional policies delimit the counter-hegemonic agendas of guest curators. Finally, I contend that Mouffe's post-Marxist move away from social class as a form of collective identification has compounded an already developing slippage towards an out and out negation of the role that public art institutions still play in maintaining class positions.

2.1 Counter-Hegemonic Objectives and Strategies

Francesco Bonami directed the 50th edition of the Venice Biennale *Dreams and Conflicts: The Dictatorship of the Viewer* (2003). He aimed to create a new structure that would transform the Biennale from a hegemonic instrument of the 'old empire' into a form of political resistance that could intervene in the process of neoliberal globalisation. Bonami's critique of neoliberalism was grounded in the idea that the world was transitioning from a period where the process of globalisation was gradually taking place, to one of globality – a social condition where individuals feel more affinity to a global imaginary than to any form of national or local collective consciousness.⁶ He identified that the concentration of power in the traditional 'Grand Show' (a format epitomised by the Venice Biennale, where the curator acts as a singular authorial agent), was the particular hegemonic force he needed to counter to achieve this aim.

right. This is not to say that reason and rational argument should disappear from politics; rather, that their place in it needs to be rethought. I am convinced that what is at stake in this enterprise is no less than the very future of democracy'. See: Chantal Mouffe, *Politics and Passions: The Stakes of Democracy*, Centre for the Study of Democracy, London, 2002.

⁶ The negative consequences of this process, for Bonami, are that our cultures and beliefs are becoming increasingly homogenized and our unique identities and imaginations threatened: 'we are spread thin over the world of otherness, witnessing the global waning of individuality and uniqueness, and losing touch with the self and identity'. See: Francesco Bonami, 'I Have a Dream' in *Dreams and Conflict: The Dictatorship of the Viewer (50th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia)*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003 p.2.

The power, concentrated in the 'dictatorship of the curator', must be dispersed to, instead, create a 'dictatorship of the viewer' and allow 'a polyphony of voices and ideas'.⁷ Bonami labelled his specific approach 'Glomanticism', in order to signify his intention of intervening, and disrupting, the march towards globality by re-establishing romanticism in curating, that appealed to people's raw emotions and encouraged them to use the work to look inwards and rediscover their unique identity.⁸

Bonami also aligned the exhibition with Chantal Mouffe's concept of agonism, by proposing that the mega-exhibition could operate as a safe, 'symbolic space', where conflict could unfold.⁹ In a statement that clearly evoked 'agonistic pluralism', he argued that, rather than trying to forge a false consensus, 'today's exhibitions, like a Greek Tragedy, must address the clash of irreconcilable elements' and 'must allow multiplicity, diversity and contradiction to exist inside the structure of the exhibition'.¹⁰ The exhibition should no longer resolve contradictions into one synthetic concept but, instead, allow the 'madness of conflicts' to play out.¹¹ Hence, his version of romanticism would not be backwards looking; it would acknowledge the fragmented, plural, antagonistic and image-overloaded condition of its own time, by offering multiple conflicting perspectives and worldviews.

His first step in attempting to realise these aims was a preliminary dispersal of power – delegating the curatorial project to ten independent guest curators who each took individual responsibility for a separate section of the show.¹² Instead of creating a cohesive narrative that a team of curators would unfold together, he presented the Biennale as a neutral container in which different visions of Utopia could come up against each other – hence 'dreams and conflict'. He presented this approach as a revolutionary new model of collective curating; a democratic and open platform for

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Bonami describes Glomanticism thus: 'A new reality somewhere between Globality and Romanticism, where economics and information finally intersect with the complexity of an individual's identity and emotions... a new romantic dimension of inner awareness'. See: Francesco Bonami, 'I Have a Dream' in *Dreams and Conflict: The Dictatorship of the Viewer (50th. International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia)*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003 p.3.

⁹ Bonami states in the catalogue introduction that 'an exhibition like La Biennale, a powerless structure compared to the political and economic administration of the world, acquires power as a symbolic ground for possible solutions' and later, 'La Biennale thus symbolises the modern world with its contradictions and growing fragmentation into more and more nations and identities'. See: Francesco Bonami, 'I Have a Dream' in *Dreams and Conflict: The Dictatorship of the Viewer, (50th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia)*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003 p.2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Bonami himself curated an exhibition entitled *Clandestine*, and *Displays and Revolutions* in collaboration with Daniel Birnbaum, Carlos Basualdo contributed *The Structure of Survival*, Catherine David curated *Contemporary Arab Representations*, Igor Zabel offered *Individual Systems*, Hou Hanru *Zones of Urgency*, Gabriel Orozco *The Everyday Altered*, Gilane Tawadros *Fault Lines*, and finally Hans Ulrich Obrist, Molly Nesbit, and Rirkrit Tiravanij coordinated the first stop of their ongoing curatorial project *Utopia Station* with the event.

different curators to articulate their own position from, in whatever way they chose. By giving each curator ‘complete autonomy’, he argued that it would allow the viewer to encounter multiple perspectives in a single space. With no singular ‘grand narrative’ offered, the curator would not impinge on the viewer’s ability to think independently, and to think ‘against the grain’. He stated that, ‘by encouraging a multiplicity of world-views we can reduce the influence of imposed, pre-packaged hegemonic views’.¹³

The curators of the **29th Sao Paulo Bienal** also aimed to negate their authorial power by deconstructing the idea of an exhibition as a singular narrative structure. ***There is always a cup of sea to sail in***, was held in 2010, and curated by Moacir dos Anjos and Agnaldo Farias, who aimed to expand the parameters of what is understood as political art – or, more precisely, to establish that ‘it is truly impossible to separate art from politics’.¹⁴ The curatorial concept was broken down into six themes that dealt with different forms of hegemonic power.¹⁵ Their choice of title – a line taken from the poem, *Invenção de Orfeu (The Invention of Orpheus, 1952)* by Brazilian poet Jorge de Lima, was intended to signify their intention to disrupt consensus thinking and to make visible, or sensible, ‘the power to move forward’.¹⁶ Their conceptualisation of the Sao Paulo Bienal, as their own particular ‘cup of sea’, signified their intention of working, politically, within the parameters of their own specific situation – of enacting counter-hegemonic critique, from within, to challenge the established practices of the

¹³ Francesco Bonami, ‘I Have a Dream’ in *Dreams and Conflict: The Dictatorship of the. Viewer (50th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia)* Thames and Hudson, London, 2003 p.2.

¹⁴ This concept was in line with both Chantal Mouffe’s writings on the relationship between art and politics and the ideas Jacques Rancière expressed in the *Politics of Aesthetics*. Mouffe has stated: ‘I want to stress at the outset that when I think about the relation between art and politics, I do not see it in terms of two separately constituted fields, art on one side and politics on the other, between which a relation would need to be established. There is an aesthetic dimension in the political and there is a political dimension in art. This is why I never speak of ‘political art’ because I consider that one cannot make a distinction between political and non-political art’. See: Chantal Mouffe, ‘Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices?’ in Dr Shep Steiner and Trevor Joyce (Eds.) *Cork Caucus: On Art, Possibility and Democracy*, Revolver, 2005 p.16. Rancière argues that art is able to upset the usual coordinates for sensorial experience of the world– art can challenge the way we view and understand the world by making us see, smell, hear or touch things differently. See: Jacques Rancière, *Politics and Aesthetics*, Continuum: Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2006.

¹⁵ The six themes were as follows. *Said, unsaid, not to be said* was based around the idea of sayability and reflected on the hegemonic power that governs who has the opportunity or ability to speak or the opportunity to be heard. The theme *Remembrance and Oblivion* dealt with the politics of history in a comparable way. It contained works concerned with what is left out and erased from historical narratives. *The Skin of the Invisible* also dealt with a politics of inclusion and exclusion by examining the politics of visibility. As the curators explain in the guidebook, visibility is not simply a natural state but is influenced by hegemonic forces that determine whether or not something can be seen. *The Other, The Same* was based around the politics of identity. This section embodied Mouffe’s understanding of the ‘constitutive outside’: that the creation of an identity always implies the establishment of a difference, the perception of something ‘other’ which constitutes its exterior. *I am the Street*, examined works, which challenged the structures of the city that define how we move about and conduct ourselves in our environment. *Finally, Far Away, Right Here* was different from the other themes, as it was intended to demonstrate the possibility of creating new structures, or other ways of doing things.

¹⁶ They explain that ‘the exhibition will put its visitors in contact with ways of thinking and inhabiting the world beyond the consensuses that organise it and keep it small, so small that not everything or everyone can fit’. They describe how creative practice contains within its own parameters infinite permutations of concepts, methods, modes, materials and practices that can make visible or sensible the power to move forward. See: Moacir Dos Anjos and Agnaldo Farias, *Catalogue of the 29th Bienal de Sao Paulo: There is Always a Cup of Sea to Sail in*, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2010, p.20

institution.¹⁷ By declaring their intention of fomenting dissensus and of stimulating viewers to move beyond the common-sense consensus ways of understanding the world, they aligned themselves clearly with Mouffe's advocacy of counter-hegemonic and agonistic practice.

Dos Anjos and Farias's identified the mode of address at the Sao Paulo Bienal as their key hegemonic battle. They perceived that standard biennial and art museum exhibitions tended to disempower the viewer by imposing on them a top-down narrative, which positioned them as only a passive recipient of knowledge. They focused, specifically, on offering the local population more agency in negotiating and interpreting the art works on view. They reasoned that they could offer something different to the standard hegemonic biennial model by speaking, not *to* the international art-going public – as these mega-events tend to do – but *in conversation with* the local population. Like Bonami, in doing this they presumed it necessary to undermine their own authorial power and give up control of the exhibition narratives.

They developed a multifaceted approach to the democratisation of the exhibition space. Firstly, they developed a series of stage-like structures— which they called 'terreiros'— in collaboration with artists and architects. These served as landmarks to their six themes. There is no specific defined purpose or function of terreiros, in Brazilian society – those who use it define its use. Hence, the terreiros would, at least theoretically, serve as spaces that people could appropriate and use, as they wish.¹⁸ However, the hope was that they would operate as the kind of agonistic public space that Mouffe advocates, providing 'meeting places, soapboxes, auditoriums, venues for debate, communion, and doubt'.¹⁹

Secondly, a team of educators was employed to bring young people from across Sao Paulo (including its most impoverished districts) into the exhibition and provide them

¹⁷ The cup acts as a metaphor for the imagination, which is at once familiar to the subject but also infinite, a space where the possibility of different ways of doing things can play out. Therefore, art is understood as intrinsically political, as by means of its own forms, practices and content it can challenge what can be seen or perceived, and how we see or perceive it, to expand the field of possibilities. See: Moacir Dos Anjos and Agnaldo Farrias, *Catalogue of the 29th Bienal de Sao Paulo: There is Always a Cup of Sea to Sail in*, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2010, p.20.

¹⁸ The decision to name these pavilions 'terreiros', a specifically Brazilian type of space is a political or counter-hegemonic statement in itself, as it centres the discourse firmly within Brazilian culture rather than looking for terms or references already in circulation in the Western art world. The term is hard to define but it is essentially an open space, in-between houses, a piece of communal land, sometimes behind or in front of the house, which people use to dry clothes, play samba, come together and prepare food.

¹⁹ See Moacir Dos Anjos and Agnaldo Farrias *Catalogue of the 29th Bienal de Sao Paulo: There is Always a Cup of Sea to Sail in*, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2010, pp.26-27.

with the critical tools to interpret the works themselves.²⁰ The Bienal invited Stela Barbieri to curate an educational project that was unprecedented in terms of scale, reach and depth: 300 art and humanities students were recruited as educators to lead both spontaneous and pre-booked tours through the exhibition. Over 35,000 teachers, from the regions schools, were also trained to discuss the biennial with their students, and use it as an educational resource.²¹

Thirdly, the curators considered how the exhibition architecture, within the Cicillo Matarazzo Pavilion, could be redesigned to subvert the dominant, authoritarian, modes of display, and give the viewer more autonomy in their negotiation of the space. Architect Marta Bogéa was employed to develop an exhibition structure that would avoid leading the viewer around a space in a predetermined way. The strategy she proposed evoked Mouffe's advocacy of an approach to counter-hegemonic exhibition-making, based on a process of disarticulation (breaking apart of standard structures, narratives or orders into separate elements) and rearticulation (bringing the elements back together in a different way). She opened up the space by disarticulating the usual rigid linear grid of walls and rearticulating it as a diagonal grid on which to place freestanding walls. This was intended to create an agonistic space where works expressing conflicting methods and positions could be set up against each other, in an antagonistic relation. By using non-rectilinear shapes in a dispersed arrangement, it enabled the production of many more juxtapositions and, thus, many more possibilities for different works to come into contact with each other. As the diagrams of the exhibition space below demonstrate (see fig. 13), it was also intended to confer the impression of a structure blown open, or a narrative deconstructed and, therefore, to signify the curator's plan to decentre their own authorship to the audience.²²

²⁰ As Assistant Curator Paulo Miyada explained to me, for Dos Anjos and Farias it was through its relationship to the local student population and value as an interactive and transformative educational resource about local culture and politics, that the Bienal could differentiate itself from other major Biennials such as Venice or Documenta. The Bienal de São Paulo is quite distinct from the Venice Biennale, which has no preoccupation with the student public whatsoever, because none of them live there. Interview with Paulo Miyada, 3.12.2011.

²¹ See Stela Barbieri's website for more details on the project and to download the education pack: <http://www.stelabarbieri.com.br/en/edu/curadoria.htm> (accessed 13.06.2012).

²² As the architect notes: 'The platform for the 29th Bienal, which seeks another order of space (non-transparent and discontinuous), organizes itself by subverting it, by devising another geometric base as its matrix – a diagonal weft. It does this, however, without hiding or covering the building, but by maintaining the tension of two spaces in dissonant cohabitation...' 'There is always a cup of sea to sail in' is curatorially defined by a multifaceted, non-linear, non-hierarchised narrative for which an isotropic, continuous and transparent space would not prove effective. It looks for cohabitation between differences, in which the definition of distinct exhibition rhythms gives the show its legibility. See: Marta Bogéa, 'On the construction of an archipelago', in Moacir Dos Anjos and Agnaldo Farrias *Catalogue of the 29th Bienal de Sao Paulo: There is Always a Cup of Sea to Sail in*, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2010, p. 418.

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Fig. 13. Marta Bogéa's plans for the 29th Sao Paulo Bienal

Their final counter-hegemonic strategy extended this disarticulation of the exhibition form through their organising principle. They purposefully subverted their own carefully constructed curatorial narrative, as if deconstructing a written text in accordance with post-structuralist theory. Such theory posits that meanings cannot be planted in particular places but must, instead, be 'randomly scattered or 'disseminated', like the planter walking along and scattering seed – so that much of it lands unpredictably or drifts in the wind'.²³

²³ Peter Barry, *Beginning theory: An introduction to literary and cultural theory*. Manchester University Press, 2002, p. 64.

The diagrams originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The diagrams were sourced from: Moacir Dos Anjos and Agnaldo Farrias, *Portolano Guidebook of the 29th Bienal de Sao Paulo: There is Always a Cup of Sea to Sail in*, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2010

Fig. 14. One of three spreads from the *Portolano Guidebook* showing colour-coded routes through the six themes.

The curators remarkably translated this idea directly into an exhibition context. Despite the six themes being utilised to guide the selection of works, the work was not physically grouped together under each theme; rather they were peppered throughout the building. In some areas the theme was more concentrated, with three or four works grouped together and then it disappeared and reappeared in another space, or sometimes on another floor entirely. They intended that the viewer would understand these themes as a conversation, or dialogue, in which they could actively participate—that ebbed and flowed through the space. They, thus, applied the technique of deconstruction, in retrospect, to their own original curatorial narrative, in an apparent bid to subvert the usual hierarchical relationship between curator and viewer. Yet, the only way that the visitor would even know the themes existed, would be to purchase the ‘Portolano’ guidebook that the curators’ developed, which contained a series of complex maps that set out six thematic routes through the space.

The strategies employed, at the 29th Bienal, had largely been developed in response to a series of self-reflexive questions that had been initiated by the curators of the previous edition. The curators, Ivo Mesquito and Ana Paula Cohen had bravely responded to a series of corruption scandals and financial problems, within the Bienal institution, by drawing attention to them and turning them into a radical curatorial concept. Instead of examining ‘politics’ as something exterior to their own practice,

they saw that it was critical to address the immediate politics of the Bienal itself, as an institutional power. They aimed to return it to the public by challenging the structural inequalities of the institution, and by attempting to rearticulate the Bienal as a space for engagement in democratic politics and civic life.²⁴

Cohen and Mesquita's central strategy was to considerably reduce the number of artists in the exhibition. They did this in order to highlight the current financial difficulties of the institution, and to question whether it is really possible to produce a coherent display on the scale that the Ciccillio Matarazzo Pavilion demands. They aimed to create a space for a 'reflexive pause' — a critical reassessment of the Bienal's social role before it rushed on to organise the next instalment.²⁵ They chose the title, ***In Living Contact***, in reference to the stated aims of the first Bienal — arguing that the Bienal had achieved these aims within its lifetime but now had to redefine its purpose in relation to the current context, where over 200 biennials competed across the globe.²⁶ The whole exhibition was, thus, structured around enabling the audience to participate in reflecting critically upon the past, present and future of the Bienal.

The third floor of the exhibition was entitled, 'Plan of Readings', and provided the materials and critical tools necessary to enable the public to conduct their own critical reading of the Bienal's history, and to think about what they wanted from a future Bienal. Derived from the Wanda Svevo Historical Archive, it contained an auditorium, an exhibition of archival material, from the Bienal, and a library of catalogues from more than 200 biennials.²⁷ The first floor was designated a 'Services' section. It included the bookshop and café, but also featured a number of artists' projects that reflected on the Bienal itself. This included a booth by Paul Ramirez Jonas where visitors could exchange a personal house key for a key to the Bienal's front door; a clear symbol of the curators' democratisation agenda.

The ground floor of the pavilion, rather than featuring an exhibition of art objects, was dramatically reconfigured to function as the 'agonistic', democratic public space. It was

²⁴ Ivo Mesquita and Ana Paula Cohen, 'Introduction' in *Catalogue of the 28th Bienal de Sao Paulo: In Living Contact*, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2010, p. 17-26.

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Ivo Mesquita and Ana Paula Cohen, 'Introduction' in *Catalogue of the 28th Bienal de Sao Paulo: In Living Contact*, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2010, p. 17.

²⁷ This floor also contained a video lounge, which featured historical footage of the performers that made up the public square programme, together with films of lectures, workshops and readings of the art featured in the exhibition. Materials generated during the show's conferences, talks and panel discussions were to be added to the archive as 'In Living Contact' progressed.

named 'the square' and was intended to function as an open 'agora' that would pay host to a programme of discussion, debate music, dance, film and performance art that the public could actively participate in, interact with, and take part in a critical discourse. However, as the curators relayed in the introduction, it was not intended to be a convivial space but rather to 'be a democratic space... in the tradition of the polis, a territory for encounters, confrontation, friction'.²⁸ As Maria Lind has noted, this approach was clearly intended to embody Mouffe's idea of the exhibition as an agonistic public space, where conflicting viewpoints and positions can come into contact with each other in a potentially transformative dialogue.²⁹

The second floor, however, played host to the most spectacular and radical statement of the Bienal: the curators left the entire floor completely empty. This concept was originally known as 'The Void', but it had been modified to the more neutral title of 'Open Plan', by the time the exhibition opened. The empty space, or void, was the visual embodiment of the central concept of the Bienal— the 'reflexive pause'. It acted as a metaphor for the budget shortfall or misappropriated finances of the Bienal Foundation, and suggested a clean slate through which the Bienal could, metaphorically, start again. It meditated on the emptiness and lack of purpose, circulating around the global Bienal circuit, and invited the viewer to consider how things might be different.

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Fig. 15. Installation Shot of 'Open Plan' at the 28th Sao Paulo Bienal: In Living Contact (2008).

²⁸ Ivo Mesquita and Ana Paula Cohen, 'Introduction' in *Catalogue of the 28th Bienal de Sao Paulo: In Living Contact*, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2010, p. 18

²⁹ Maria Lind states: 'Instead, the curators rethought the biennial in terms of what I am calling the curatorial: They mobilized an entire system of variables and contexts, carefully considering the history of the biennial, the current institutional situation in São Paulo and Brazil, the combination of artists and of artworks, and the unorthodox spatial organization of the building, in order to produce not a survey but a situation...In this sense, the curatorial is a qualitative concept, just like the political in Mouffe'. Maria Lind, 'On the Curatorial' *ArtForum*, October 2009

In the first physical manifestation of *Utopia Station*, the curators also offered the exhibition as a supposedly neutral platform for visitors to come together and discuss and debate politics, without interference from predetermined hegemonic curatorial narratives. It was unique, however, in that it was clearly framed by its organisers as a leftist project, and was explicitly intended to connect to existing and emerging radical leftist political platforms.³⁰ Framed around the recuperation of the concept of Utopia, it began as a book project initiated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Molly Nesbit, developed into a series of discursive events attended, mainly, by leftist intelligentsia – but was finally materialised as a series of open-ended and ongoing ‘research exhibitions’.

The rhetoric coming from the curators framed the project, in terms of resisting institutional definition – arguing that they had ‘no desire to formalise the stations into an institution of any kind’ – and, thus, had affinities to the post-anarchist and autonomist positions, outlined in the first chapter. Yet, the first physical incarnation of the project, incidentally, formed part of the 50th Venice Biennale. Hence, the embedding of the project in one of the most powerful and established ‘art world’ institutions firmly situated the project as a form of ‘counter-hegemonic curating from within’.³¹ The majority of the other exhibition outcomes were housed within established art institutions. However, the last edition was staged at the World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2005— a forum for grassroots and activist organisations, which, many have argued, enacts a model of democratic multiplicity akin to agonistic pluralism.³²

³⁰ Jacques Ranciere is referenced as an influence in the introductory text for the first manifestation of the project at the Venice Biennale. See: Molly Nesbit, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Rijkrit Tiravanija, ‘What is a Station?’ In *Dreams and Conflict: The Dictatorship of the Viewer 50th. International Art Exhibition*, La Biennale di Venezia, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003, p.330. Hans Ulrich Obrist mentions Glissant when discussing the exhibition as part of a panel discussion with James Meyer (moderator) Catherine David, Okwui Enwezor, Francesco Bonami, Yinka Shonibare and Martha Rosler. He states: ‘Utopia owes a debt to novelist, poet, and Caribbean studies theorist Edouard Glissant’s ideas regarding large-scale exhibitions and globalisation’. See: Tim Griffin, ‘Global Tendencies: Globalism and Large-scale Exhibitions’ in *Art Forum*, November 2003.

³¹ Molly Nesbit, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Rijkrit Tiravanija, ‘What is a Station?’ In *Dreams and Conflict: The Dictatorship of the Viewer 50th. International Art Exhibition*, La Biennale di Venezia, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003, p.330.

³² See, for example, Janet Conway’s book which argues that the World Social Forum and its processes can only be adequately understood through the idea of agonistic democracy and the concept of hegemony as proposed by Mouffe: Janet M. Conway, *Edges of Global Justice: The World Social Forum and Its ‘Others’*, Routledge, New York, 2012.

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Utopia Station at the 50th Venice Biennale. Fig. 16. (Left) Chapel of the "Church of Fear" initiated by Christoph Schlingensief. Fig. 17. (Right) Rijkit Tiravanija's plywood station.

Like Bonami, the organisers presented the project as a revolutionary exhibitionary model of counter-hegemonic resistance to neoliberalism: 'through this process we hope to demonstrate the exhibition's power to critique globalisation understood as a homogenising force'.³³ In order to further this broad counter-hegemonic agenda, they aimed to do two things. Firstly, like the curators of the 29th Sao Paulo Bienal, they aimed to subvert the objectification of the exhibition as a medium for passive consumption, in order to empower the viewer to engage more critically with art and politics. Secondly, they aimed to challenge the perception of 'utopia' as 'wishful thinking' or 'fantasy', and recuperate the concept as a valid means of imagining and working towards a better future society.

The curators were influenced by the theory of writer, poet and cultural theorist Eduard Glissant. He argued that the exhibition must keep changing and remain fluid and open in order to resist becoming merely an object of consumption itself. As Hans Ulrich Obrist explained:

He understood the exhibition as research, an occasion for a group to work together and progress – not a model for showing materials but for creating a collective form of intelligence....an exhibition is not merely a product to be packaged and shipped off to the next venue.³⁴

Their creation of a form of open-ended, un-finite and borderless exhibition-making was – as Glissant advocates – intended to challenge the stagnant permanence and

³³ Hans Ulrich Obrist in Tim Griffin, 'Global Tendencies: Globalism and Large-scale Exhibitions', *Art Forum*, November 2003.

³⁴ Glissant believed that the exhibition should resist the time format of the fly-in, fly-out exhibition industry, in which an exhibition is switched on and off and where everything is repainted white once the show is dismantled. The exhibition, according to Glissant, shouldn't be consumed in one visit but be an ongoing experience. See: Hans Ulrich Obrist in Tim Griffin, 'Global Tendencies: Globalism and Large-scale Exhibitions', *Art Forum*, November 2003.

rigidity of institutions, like the Venice Biennale, from within its own frame.³⁵ The Venice manifestation did not comprise a traditional white cube display of art objects. It functioned more as a kind of communal space, where artists were commissioned to produce the structures and platforms for visitors to come together and engage in political discourse. It comprised of a plywood 'station' designed by Rikjit Tiravanija, that incorporated a stage for events, seating designed by Liam Gillick, a chapel, an online radio station, a bar operated by Superflex, serving their Guarana Power cola, toilets designed by Atelier van Lieshout, and around 160 poster and text contributions by artists on the subject of 'Utopia' — which were pasted up around the site.³⁶ Their focus on discursivity, functionality and fluidity was summarised in the official catalogue, by the curators, when they described the station as 'a place to stop, to contemplate, to listen and see, to rest and refresh, to talk and exchange'.³⁷

This approach was emblematic of the trend, at that time, for 'relational' exhibitions, which were envisioned more in terms of facilitating social relations and discussion than with the display of final art objects.³⁸ They hoped that, through this strategy, the station could actively constitute a different kind of public to the atomised social relations consistently reproduced by conventional 'white cube' installations. Instead, they aimed to encourage the visitors to imagine themselves as part of a collective social dynamic.³⁹ Hence, according to the curators, 'Utopia Stations do not require architecture for their existence — only a meeting, a gathering' and 'performances, concerts, lectures, readings, film programs, parties... define the Station as much as its solid objects do'.⁴⁰

³⁵ See: Molly Nesbit, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Rikjit Tiravanija, 'What is a Station?' In *Dreams and Conflict: The Dictatorship of the Viewer 50th. International Art Exhibition*, La Biennale di Venezia, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003, p.330.

³⁶ The poster project would later be exhibited at the Haus fur Kunst and the WSF. It was facilitated by the online journal E-Flux and also showcased online as part of their website. See: www.e-flux.com/projects/utopia/index.html (accessed 12.02.2015).

³⁷ Francesco Bonami, 'I Have a Dream' in *Dreams and Conflict: The Dictatorship of the Viewer (50th International Art Exhibition*, La Biennale di Venezia), Thames and Hudson, London, 2003, p.3. The text is also available online at: www.e-flux.com/projects/utopia/about.html (accessed 10.02.2015).

³⁸ Since Nicolas Bourriaud coined the term '*Relational Aesthetics*' 'to describe 'art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interaction and its social context' it has also passed into curatorial discourse to describe exhibition projects conceived by curators with the aim of facilitating social interaction and exchange rather than the display of final art objects. See for example Claire Bishop's discussion of 'relational exhibitions' in Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: The Politics of Spectatorship*, Verso, London, 2012 pp. 207-217. The term 'relational exhibitions' appears on p.209.

³⁹ See Staniszewski's analysis of the ideological underpinning of several key exhibitions at MoMA, New York, for example, which elucidate the importance of exhibition installation in maintaining the liberal democratic hegemony. She reveals that MoMA adopted the 'white cube' model first developed at the Folkwang Museum in Essen as a means of consistently reproducing a highly individualised form of social experience that encouraged people to view themselves as autonomous individuals independent of social relations. See: Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1998.

⁴⁰ Molly Nesbit, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Rikjit Tiravanija, 'What is a Station?' In *Dreams and Conflict: The Dictatorship of the Viewer 50th. International Art Exhibition*, La Biennale di Venezia, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003, p.330.

The curators further proposed to disarticulate the idea that there is ‘no alternative’ to free-market capitalism by positioning the idea of ‘utopia’ — not as an end point — a distant place cut off from reality — but as an ongoing process, a way of thinking in, and beyond, the present reality. They invited radical political thinkers, cultural theorists (including Eduard Glissant), curators and artists to discuss their ideas of how people could work towards a form of ‘utopia’ in the here and now. There was also an open call, put out to artists, to produce posters on the subject of Utopia. Around 160 of these poster and text contributions were pasted up around the site. By facilitating collective social interaction, whilst offering multiple conflicting visions of possible ‘utopias’, they hoped to generate the kind of debate and agonistic discourse that could generate a productive and workable alternative to neoliberal consensus politics.⁴¹

In these four exhibitions, the curators’ own political positions are deemed irrelevant. The curators are envisioned as neutral facilitators of political discussion. However, when ‘What, Why and For Whom? (WHW), curated the 11th Istanbul Biennial, ***What Keeps Mankind Alive?*** (2009), they argued that the key to fomenting an agonistic discourse was, conversely, to disarticulate the concept of the ‘white cube’ as a politically neutral space. They proposed to use a traditional ‘white cube’ mode of installation, but to rearticulate it as a distinctly partisan, leftist polemic.⁴²

WHW had identified the Istanbul Biennial as an institution that was so entangled with neoliberal ideology that it represented the perfect locus through which to counter it. The Istanbul Biennial was founded and funded by the pharmaceutical dynasty, the Eczacıbaşı family, and is sponsored by the KOC Holdings Group — one of the world’s richest companies. Both of these groups had a strategic business interest in creating a ‘European Culture’ in Turkey, centred round the defining neoliberal values of individual autonomy, free-expression and tolerance.⁴³ However, they also had a policy of non-

⁴¹ Its focus on collective social relationships was also counter-hegemonic in a more immediate sense as it directly contradicted Bonami’s overall vision for *Dreams and Conflict*, which focussed completely on autonomous individual experience, thus working against the overall conceptual framework of the structure it was operating within.

⁴² The exact dates it ran for are 12 September to 8 November 2009.

⁴³ Koc Holdings Group bought the right to sponsor the Biennial for the next ten years outright in 2006. The art-museum Istanbul Modern (IKSV), founded by the Eczacıbaşı business-empire as a non-state enterprise, is regularly presented as the face of modern Turkey. Harutyunyan (et al.) describe IKSV as follows: ‘Initiated by pharmacist Dr. Nejat Culture and Arts (IKSV) is the organising and commissioning body of the Istanbul Biennial, along with other film, music, and theatre festivals. Structured along the lines of a modern corporation with a board of directors, management, international projects, and corporate communication (which in turn includes a corporate identity and publications subdivision, information and records center, marketing, etc.), IKSV epitomizes the ways in which contemporary art institutions have reorganized in conformity with the contemporary forces of economic rationalization’. For more on this see: Angela Harutyunyan, Aras Özgün, Eric Goodfield, ‘Event and Counter-Event: The Political Economy of the Istanbul Biennial and Its Excesses’, *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol. 23, Issue 4, 2011 p.480

interference in curatorial decision-making, which would allow WHW to speak from a uniquely clear political position. WHW seized this opportunity to subvert the normal operations of the Biennial circuit, the Biennial format itself, and the ever-present, but disingenuous, rhetoric of political engagement by 'explicitly turning the exhibition into a propagandist tool', and stating clearly that 'we were trying to send a political message through the exhibition'.⁴⁴ They intentionally and explicitly articulated their own specific political position — a revised communism — through the content, structuring and production of the exhibition, and aimed to offer an exemplary production apparatus that could be taken forward by other leftist curators.⁴⁵ Just as Mouffe proposes, they intended to operate as an antagonistic guest, disarticulating those structures and practices of the Istanbul Biennial that serve the 'capitalist hegemonic agenda', and aiming to rearticulate and re-orientate them towards 'socialist inspired political purposes'.⁴⁶

The ever-presence of the Biennial sponsors logo and brand was emphasised as a visual symbol of neoliberalism, which they could explicitly counter through their own visual propaganda campaign. This consisted of a series of posters that were placed throughout the biennial buildings and Istanbul, which utilised Communist iconography and posed questions such as: 'What is robbing a bank compared with founding a bank?'. Here, Mouffe's idea of the exhibition as agonistic public space was strategically employed by symbolically playing out a battle between two antagonistic forces — neoliberalism and communism — in the public arena.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Quote taken from: Sven Spieker, 'Interview with WHW Collective (Zagreb)' *ARTMargins*, July 2011. Accessible online here: <http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/5-interviews/635-interview-with-whw-collective-zagreb> (accessed 07.05.2011).

⁴⁵ They not only consistently engage in leftist politics through the themes they select, but also in the ways in which they organise and structure their practice and produce their exhibitions. Importantly, they did not set out to become a curatorial collective per se, but rather intended to produce exhibitions as a means of engaging with leftist politics in an open public environment. WHW outline their formation in these terms in an interview in *ARTMargins*. They state: 'The impetus for us to start working together came from *Arkzin*, which started in 1991 as the fanzine of the Anti-war Campaign of Croatia and later became a publishing house. In the 1990s it was perhaps the most important critical voice. In 1998 they published the 150th anniversary edition of the *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels, edited by Boris Buden with an introduction by Slavoj Žižek, and approached one of us to organize a contemporary art exhibition. The book itself was completely ignored, and the idea was that the exhibition format might trigger a much needed public debate on the issues of suppressed socialist history and political thinking that would imagine a future beyond the immediate reality of a transition to neo-liberal heaven which at that time was still seen as the only solution to all post-socialist maladies. As this was a topic of immense importance it was clear to us from the beginning that it had to be a collective project'. Sven Spieker, 'Interview with WHW Collective (Zagreb)' *ARTMargins*, July 2011. Accessible online here: <http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/5-interviews/635-interview-with-whw-collective-zagreb> (accessed 07.05.2011).

⁴⁶ Melene Vest Hansen, Remembering Istanbul: What, How & For Whom? Canons and Archives in Contemporary Art Biennialisation in Gunhild Borggreen and Rune Gade (eds.) *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*, Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2013 p.234.

⁴⁷ Ezgi Basak, 'What Keeps Mankind Not Alive?', blog post for *Dissident Warwick*, written February 03, 2010. See: http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/dissidentwarwick/entry/what_keeps_mankind/ (accessed 09.05.2011).

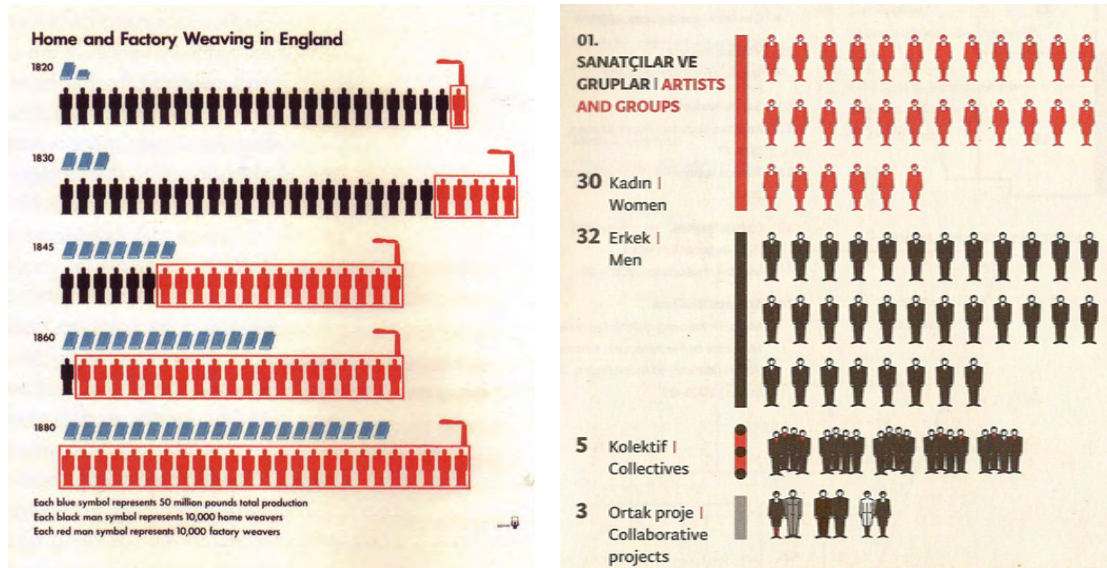


Fig. 18. (Left) An example of the isotype posters produced by Gerd Arntz and Otto Neurath, *Home and Factory Weaving in England*, from Otto Neurath, *Modern Man in the Making*, 1930. Fig. 19. (Right) WHW's pictogram showing the breakdown of artists in the 11th Istanbul Biennial. This was reproduced on the wall of the exhibition and in the *Biennial Guide and Reader*. The pictogram appears with the kind permission of the Istanbul Foundation for Art and Culture (IKSV).

Like all of the curators in the previous case studies, WHW aimed to empower the viewing public: 'was it not somehow possible, we asked ourselves, to give the public some form of 'agency,' making choices that would boost their capacity for action?'⁴⁸ In a distinctively Brechtian manner, they developed strategies to demystify the processes of exhibition-making. WHW devised a series of posters, influenced by Otto Neurath and Gerd Arntz's Isotypes, printed directly on the exhibition walls, which made public, politicised details, such as the exhibition budget and expenditure.⁴⁹ They also presented detailed breakdowns of the artists they had selected according to gender, geographic location, age and professional status. They also did this in order to make their own strategy of differencing the canon, by including non-Western and non-professional artists, explicit. In stark contrast to the others, they understood that the chief means, by which the curator could empower the viewer, was to make the mechanisms used to construct the exhibition as visible as possible, and to demonstrate that what was articulated was the subjective and personal perspective of real people. Whilst the key to fomenting dissensus and stimulating peoples' political passions, was the articulation of a clear alternative to the neoliberal consensus, they purposefully

⁴⁸ What, How and for Whom?, 'This is the 11th Istanbul International Biennial curators' text' in What, How and for Whom? (eds.), *What Keeps Mankind Alive? The Texts: 11th International Istanbul Biennial*, Yapi Kredi Publications (Turkey), 2009 p.95.

⁴⁹ Though it has not been commented on, these diagrams were clearly influenced by the socialist, political philosopher, activist and museum director, Otto Neurath who curated exhibitions in the 1920s for the Gesellschafts und Wirtschaftsmuseum in Vienna in order to better engage the public in the reform programs of the municipal socialist government. Neurath looked to make more legible and affective displays that could encourage people to actively question and debate the ideas on display. He thus worked with artist Gerd Arntz, architect Joseph Frank and Marie Reidmeister to develop a new pictorial universal language, the isotype. For more on this see: Christopher Burke, 'Isotype: representing social facts pictorially', *Information Design Journal*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2009, pp.210-211.

defined, and voiced, a position that the viewer could orientate their own position in relation to, mobilise around or react against. They reasoned that only this approach could open up the exhibition to critical questions and disagreement.

What follows, offers a critical examination of how well these exhibitions met Mouffe's criteria for an effective counter-hegemonic practice. I ask, have the curators correctly identified the elements of their particular institutional context that serve to reinforce the neoliberal hegemony, and was there the necessary moment of rearticulation that Mouffe prescribes? Did these strategies help to empower the viewer? Did the structure allow antagonistic or conflicting views to come into contact with each other? Was it open and democratic enough to enable members of the public to truly participate in the discourse, and did it offer a sanctuary from commercial interests? And, finally, did it link to other radical movements and discourses, in order to form a 'chain of equivalence'? The factors that may have limited the curators' ability to enact their curatorial strategies are also considered. These findings are used to problematise the contemporary curatorial applications of Mouffe's theoretical framework, and to point to a more effective way forward for the exhibition at Tate Liverpool.

2.2. Identification, Disarticulation and the Crucial Moment of Rearticulation

The strategies I have outlined indicate that there are two distinct and conflicting ways in which curators attempt to empower visitors to imagine, discuss and debate alternatives to the neoliberal hegemony. In the first, the curator imagines himself or herself as a neutral facilitator, and envisages the exhibition space as a neutral container where others' worldviews, political values and opinions can be played out. My analyses showed that these curators, following Mouffe's theory, felt that the key to giving the viewer more critical and political agency lay in disarticulating all top-down or hegemonic narratives, structures and modes of display, in the exhibition. This often involved decentring or negating his or her personal curatorial authorship and authority. In the second approach, the curator conversely identifies the idea of the exhibition *as a neutral space* as the key hegemonic battle. That four out of the five exhibitions I have analysed are manifestations of the first approach reflects the strong leaning towards deconstructive and discursive strategies, in contemporary curatorial practice.

My analysis of *Dreams and Conflict*, *Utopia Station* and the 28th and 29th Sao Paulo Bienal, demonstrated, however, that there are manifold problems with the first approach. Though, at face value, the curatorial strategies employed seemed to embody Mouffe's proposals, further scrutiny revealed that they fail to meet her criteria for politically effective practices. They indicated some critical problems with the application of her theoretical frameworks, within existing institutional contexts. It was clear from my analysis of all four exhibitions, that these different attempts to subvert curatorial authorship did not serve to transfer more political and intellectual agency to the viewer and, instead, actually served to disenfranchise the audience.

Bonami's vision for viewer empowerment at the 50th Venice Biennale combined the decentring of curatorial authorship with a fragmented structure. This was intended as a reflection of contemporary global society and was designed so that people were expected to organise their own experience. However, the critical response to the show was that far from being empowering, it simply served to confuse people and disengage them from the work. Indeed, the reviews suggested that because there was so much work on show, the exhibition resembled an overwhelming cacophony where individual voices were hard to make out through the din. It was, thus, disempowering, as comprehension on any level was difficult for the audience.⁵⁰ It resembled the kind of chaos of 'pure dissemination' that Mouffe warns against. When Mouffe emphasises the importance of disarticulating hegemonic practices, structures and narratives, she warns that without the moment of rearticulation, that provides an alternative position or a clear pathway to the activism necessary for social transformation, nothing more can be offered from exhibition projects than pure discursivity, or the chaotic dissemination of multiple messages.⁵¹ Decentering authorship by delegating it to a wider team of curators, therefore, simply transferred power horizontally to Bonami's peers, rather than vertically to the viewer.

⁵⁰ See for example Lisa Dennison, deputy director and chief curator of New York's Guggenheim Museum, was quoted by Carol Vogel of the New York Times as saying, 'having different portions of the Arsenale organized by different curators was confusing and hyperstimulating' and Adrian Searle, writing for the Guardian, describes his frustration with the Arsenale, 'This clamour, you say, is how the world is, and art is part of it. But for the spectator to deal with all this, we have to be cruel, or be swept along in the mass. We need to be slowed down'. See Carol Vogel, 'Heat Upstages Art at the Venice Biennale' *The New York Times*, June 16 2003 available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/06/16/arts/design/16VENI.html> (accessed 13.02.2013) and Adrian Searle, 'Stop that Racket', *The Guardian*, 17 June 2003 (accessed 13.02.2013).

⁵¹ See: Chantal Mouffe, *Critique as counter-Hegemonic Intervention*, EIPCP, April 2008. Available online at: <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0808/mouffe/en> (accessed 08/02/2013).

My visit to the 29th Sao Paulo Bienal in 2011 provided an opportunity to directly experience how such a focus on subverting curatorial authorship impacted on the visitor. I evaluated how the deconstruction of the exhibition's themes effected my critical engagement with the curatorial concept, in order to assess whether this approach engendered more democratic power relations. I found that without going on one of the guided tours that were offered, or following the route map provided in the guidebook that led the visitor around the exhibition thematically, it was very difficult to develop any understanding of the specific relationship between art and politics that the curators were trying to articulate. There were sporadic sections where there was an explicit relationship between the works: for example, on the third floor there was a section that focussed on working conditions. However, within the majority of the vast exhibition space, I could not identify any uniting theme.

Although it was the curators' intention to allow the viewer to make their own connections, and develop their own personal reading of the works, in my experience, it was exceptionally difficult to undergo this process of self-determination. Firstly, as with *Dreams and Conflict*, the sheer number of works, included, made it difficult to get hold of the bigger picture. Secondly, the open plan exhibition design meant that there were so many possible connections between works, and works impinging on other works, that it was hard to focus on what any particular relationships might be. Thirdly, the work selected was varied and their political meaning was certainly not always overt, meaning that, even on the level of each individual work, it was sometimes hard to determine how they could be considered political. Finally, there was very little interpretation material present in the exhibition space. This lack of direct information to help contextualise the work, again made it hard to comprehend the works on an individual level or grasp the overall concept. This method of navigating the space, may have allowed the visitor to determine their own course around the exhibition space, and dip in and out as they chose, but it did not effectively engage them in a discourse about the relationship between aesthetics and politics, or expand their critical capacity.

The diagrams originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The diagrams were sourced from: Moacir Dos Anjos and Agnaldo Farrias, *Portolano Guidebook of the 29th Bienal de Sao Paulo: There is Always a Cup of Sea to Sail in*, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2010

Fig. 20. One of eleven spreads from the *Portolano Guidebook*, which featured the route maps for three floors of the Oscar Niemeyer pavilion, showing colour-coded routes through the six themes.

Using the series of six route maps provided in the guidebook, to navigate the exhibition, was also a disempowering experience. Conceptualised by the curators as a ‘portolano’ – a sailors guidebook containing navigation maps – they counselled that ‘you may heed them or ignore them, as this booklet, this portolan guide, was designed so that you could plot your own courses, find your own way along the thread of impressions, opinions, and feelings spun as you move about this building’.⁵² The portolano provided a way to ‘rediscover’ the six original curatorial themes that had been disarticulated by placing the works essentially randomly throughout the exhibition space. Yet, the maps were very difficult to follow. The routes were colour coded and inscribed as lines on the map, but they were not marked in any way, physically, on the exhibition space.⁵³

A retrospective analysis of the themes showed, however, that they would have been very helpful in terms of understanding the curator’s nuanced conceptualisation of the relationship between art and politics. Hence, by disarticulating the themes, and by taking away any interpretive materials that might inhibit autonomous individual thought, the curators unwittingly created new barriers to comprehension and

⁵² Moacir Dos Anjos and Agnaldo Farrias, *Portolano Guidebook of the 29th Bienal de Sao Paulo: There is Always a Cup of Sea to Sail in*, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2010, p. 5.

⁵³ Following the routes in retrospect, wasn’t any easier. I attempted to do this using the list of works contained in each theme, which was only contained in the *Portolano* guidebook, the maps within the same guide, my own stickered notes and the exhibition catalogue. This was a particularly gruelling process as the catalogue refused, like the exhibition, to group the works into the themes, or even into alphabetical order and my own notes were in the order of their geographic location within the building. The amount of cross-referencing needed for this was vast and incredibly time-consuming.

understanding. It was equally problematic that in order to follow the routes, and to even know that the themes exist, you had to locate and pay for the *Portolano* guidebook. However, it was not clearly advertised anywhere within the space of the exhibition.⁵⁴ If a visitor did not know about the book, or could not afford to buy it, there was no way of comprehending what the six themes were.⁵⁵ It, thus, ironically functioned as a strategy of distinction, not as a means of democratising the space. It separated out the ways in which people that were visiting the exhibition for different purposes, experienced the show: one system for the art cognoscenti and one system for the local visitor.⁵⁶

Such examples have highlighted the problem of confronting the visitor with too much content without a coherent narrative to guide them. However, my analyses showed how a negation of content could be equally disempowering for the visitor. The curators of *Utopia Station*, for example, strategically avoided defining their own vision of Utopia, instead offering an unmediated multitude of different perspectives and a series of flexible platforms and structures designed by artists intended only to facilitate and encourage collective discussion. However, the reviews indicate that there was little engagement with these platforms after the opening events. Visitors were confused by the lack of content: without it there was little to react to or to talk about. Hence, the structures, rather than facilitating social relations and collective discussion, tended to isolate those who did not understand what they were *supposed* to be doing, and how they were *supposed* to be doing it.

Moreover, this particular approach would also fail to meet Mouffe's criteria for an effective counter-hegemonic practice, as it lacked the necessary moment of rearticulation that she deems essential. Following her logic, for the leftist curator to

⁵⁴ It was priced at the equivalent of roughly £7.00 – certainly not an easily affordable amount to many of the visitors to the Bienal.

⁵⁵ There is only one reference to the routes within the exhibition space, on the wall-panel of information towards the back wall of the ground floor, but the majority of visitors would easily miss this information, as it is not located by the entrance. The themes are only labelled within the space, where they identify the Terreiros, but in these texts there is no information that indicates that the theme extends to a series of works rather than just the Terreiro structure itself.

⁵⁶ This contradicts one of the principal aims of the Bienal, which defines its position as an 'instrument of education and social inclusion'. The curators chose not to mark the routes out, by using vinyl markings on the floor, because they thought it too imposing, potentially contradicting their mission to counter their own 'hegemonic' narratives. However, even if this is the case, surely the guide could have been given away for free to those who wanted to use it. It is perhaps rightly assumed by the curatorial team that those people visiting the show who have not visited an art gallery would have been better introduced to the works via one of the educators tours, rather than by navigating the complex system of thematic routes, but that should have been left to the individual viewer to decide rather than excluding them as a matter of course. See Hietor Martins, *The Importance of the Bienal de São Paulo to Brazil*, in *Portolano Guidebook of the 29th Bienal de São Paulo: There is Always a Cup of Sea to Sail in*, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2010, p.7.

make a political impact it is absolutely crucial to never leave an exhibition as a disarticulated site of openness, where artworks are left to speak for themselves:

The second moment, the moment of re-articulation is crucial. Otherwise we will be faced with a chaotic situation of pure dissemination, leaving the door open for attempts of re-articulation by non-progressive forces.⁵⁷

As this statement indicates, counter hegemonic curatorial strategies must not operate a strategy of critique for critiques own sake, or resort to pure dissemination or discursivity: by opening the ground up, but failing to make a clear case for an alternative leftist path, this type of practice encourages right-wing opportunism. It would thus be more effective for the leftist curator to make his or her own political and authorial position clear. *Utopia Station* ultimately offered nothing more than an empty political gesture – an illusion of a democratic and pluralistic open platform, gift-wrapped for an elitist art world audience. It failed to suggest any coherent way forward or forge any kind of unity that might have provided a viable form of political resistance to the neoliberal hegemony.

Similarly — though, Maria Lind claimed that Mesquita and Cohen’s gesture of leaving a whole floor of the 28th Sao Paulo Bienal empty, represented an exemplary model of agonistic practice — a closer analysis of Mouffe’s criteria reveals that their strategy of complete negation was inconsistent with her ideas. Mouffe argues that this kind of practice, ‘while claiming to be very radical, remains trapped within a very deterministic framework according to which the negative gesture is, in itself, enough to bring about the emergence of a new form of subjectivity; as if this subjectivity was already latent, ready to emerge as soon as the weight of the dominant ideology would have been lifted’.⁵⁸ Such a conception is, in her view, completely anti-political. Their strategy of ‘absolute negation’ – their refusal to populate and programme the space or assert their own position – would, in Mouffe’s terms, be ineffective, as it did not offer any articulation of a clear alternative that could foment the creation of new empowered and critical subjectivities. The absence of content unsurprisingly alienated the local public and failed to engage them in debate.

⁵⁷ Chantal Mouffe, *Critique as counter-Hegemonic Intervention*, EIPCP, April 2008. Available online at: <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0808/mouffe/en> (accessed 08/02/2013).

⁵⁸ Chantal Mouffe, ‘Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices?’ in Dr Shep Steiner and Trevor Joyce (Eds.) *Cork Caucus: On Art, Possibility and Democracy*, Revolver, 2005 p.162.

The turn towards deconstructive approaches within contemporary curatorial practice has, however, been directly influenced by Mouffe's application of post-structuralist discourse theory to the construction of public space, which frames the exhibition as a lisible (readable) text, articulated by the curator.⁵⁹ The use of textual analogy enables exhibition-makers to imagine new ways of shifting the agency away from the curator-as-author to the viewer-as-reader. The curators of the 29th Sao Paulo Bienal, for example, developed their strategies by conceptualising the exhibition as a lisible text that needed to be disarticulated, blown-open and dispersed. They aimed to convert it into a non-sequential, non-syntagmatic and undirected sequence that would more closely resemble a conversational form, and, as such, facilitate dialogue with an audience. But, however fitting an analogy between the exhibition form and a lisible text is, it is important to point out for the purposes of actually conceptualising and producing exhibitions, the exhibition is *not* a written text, but is, primarily, a visual and spatial medium which is experienced multi-sensorially. Part of the problem with using these methods, as a means of increasing the agency of the viewer, is that they are derived too literally from literary theory and fail to take into account the specific properties of the exhibition medium.

This, seemingly obvious, point becomes critical – not so much when the curators use literary strategies as metaphors – but when these metaphors are applied too literally. In these cases, the analogy with literary texts prevents the exhibition medium from being recognised for what it is: an inherently contaminated and limited communicatory form. The authorship of an exhibition is always decentred and blown open by the viewer, no matter how far the curator may have attempted to dictate a set narrative or route through the space. An exhibition is an amalgamation of existing 'texts' or artworks, which already contain multiple signs, with multiple meanings and possible interpretations. Each visitor will of course have a completely different and subjective experience of each individual artwork, which, though certain meanings can be suggested to the viewer through its positioning and interpretation, cannot be

⁵⁹ The concept of exhibition-as-text has also been reinforced by scholars in cultural, museum and curatorial studies, such as Mieke Bal and Paul Basu, who have applied literary theory to their analysis of exhibitions in order to deconstruct the exhibition narrative. See, for example: Mieke Bal, 'The Discourse of the Museum', in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, Sandy Nairne (eds.), *Thinking about Exhibitions*. London and New York, 2006. And Sharon Macdonald and Paul Basu (eds.), *Exhibition Experiments*, Oxford, 2007.

completely controlled by the curator.⁶⁰ Moreover, the viewer has the freedom to move about as they choose in the exhibition space, and may completely ignore interpretive texts without necessarily negating the quality of their experience.⁶¹ The constant conceptualisation of exhibitions as a purely textual or discursive form completely overstates the authorial control a curator has over the structuring of a narrative or thesis, and the way that an exhibition is 'read' or interpreted by the audience: it implies that there is a need to decentre an authorship and open up a text that was never legible, stable or closed in the first place. Contemporary curatorial attempts to decentre or subvert authorship and, therefore, actually deprive the viewer of the opportunity to subvert and decentre a narrative, take a position, or formulate a counter-argument, in the moment of encounter.

On a practical level, there are numerous factors that limit a curator's ability to author an exhibition in the way that a writer constructs a text. Whereas a writer is free to select any word they choose and employ any syntagmatic sequence, the curator is extremely limited. Even the curators of the largest and most prominent art institutions cannot access every artwork they would like. Many works are too expensive or fragile to transport, loan requests are frequently rejected, as works have been already promised to other institutions, due to intra-institutional politics, or conservation issues. An exhibition will, thus, always be a compromised narrative, or thesis, skewed by these omissions. Additionally, the size, shape and conservation requirements of artworks often dictate where they can sit in a space, even before we consider the challenging considerations necessitated by film, new media or interactive art. In an art museum context budgetary and spatial constraints are likely to be much more pronounced than the examples in this chapter, drawn from biennials. Moreover, there are often limitations imposed on what can be articulated within institutional exhibitions, particularly when dealing with political themes, which dictate how the curator-as-author speaks, who they speak to and how they say it. This is further compromised by the marketing and audience development objectives that are, at present, the central

⁶⁰ Of course the reader of a text literally has the freedom to negotiate a book in the way that they choose and they can read it upside down or back to front, but there would be little point in doing this? The viewer of the exhibition, on the other hand, can still have a productive experience from viewing individual artworks out of sequence, for longer or shorter periods on their own terms.

⁶¹ The viewer, with the exception of the rare labyrinthine models that literally direct a set path, has the freedom to move about however they choose in the exhibition space, many visitors choose to approach an exhibition in reverse order or, if crowded, let the space in front of a work determine the order in which they view the works. The visitor has the freedom to determine whether or not they read exhibition texts or captions, whether they discuss the works with other people, whether they search for more information on their phones, the length of time they spend with one work as opposed to others, and whether or not they return to certain works.

drivers of major art institutions. All of these factors demonstrate that an exhibition can never be a cohesive and complete authorial text.

My analyses showed that the literal application of deconstructivist methodologies within exhibition-making is not only unnecessary, but is, often, actively counter-productive. The lack of narrative, thesis, route, structure or interpretation can be confusing or alienating for the viewer. Articulating a clear curatorial argument or narrative, or trying to direct the viewer's attention towards the reasons why specific works were brought together at this particular moment, in this particular place, is not hegemonic, as long as it is offered clearly as a constructed, subjective work that is open to contestation and critique. The professed intention of subverting authorship in exhibitions such as the Sao Paulo Biennial is also often disingenuous as they are still authored – the works *were* selected with a particular intention – and thus these strategies conceal that authorship and reinforce the false impression that the exhibition is the articulation of a neutral and authoritative institution. They also repress the curator's own right to exercise their creative and political agency through their work, alienating them from their creative selves. Most importantly, the focus on curatorial authorship has meant that other more repressive nodal points of power, within the exhibition, which serve to prevent challenges to the neoliberal status quo, remained intact. This included, crucially, the modes of address and display that reinforce class positions, regulate social behaviours, promote the neoliberal ideal of 'individual freedom' and constitute individual atomistic viewing subjects.

WHW, in their curation of the 11th Istanbul Biennial took the view that the authorial voice only becomes hegemonic when it is presented as scientific fact rather than a position or opinion. They developed a much more convincing counter-hegemonic approach. In contrast to the other curators, they identified the myth that an art exhibition is *and ought to be* a neutral presentation of facts as the received idea that they most urgently needed to disarticulate and challenge, if the institutional exhibition was to be recuperated as a form of counter-hegemonic critique. WHW specifically chose not to focus on deconstructing the 'white cube'. They chose instead to retain and rearticulate the 'white cube' as a political instrument. They used it to effectively disarticulate the sedimented idea that exhibitions held at major art institutions should be neutral and impartial.

WHW's approach was also a more effective realisation of Mouffe's theoretical framework for counter-hegemonic critique, as they successfully disarticulated a dominant discourse and rearticulated so that it did different things. Starting from this principle that curating is always a politically partisan act, they emphasised their partiality in order to subvert the apparent 'neutrality' and 'objectivity' conferred by the 'white cube'. As they state in their introductory text:

The curatorial view is not objective in the sense of some alleged impartiality, whereby equal distancing would enable an accurate point of view. Exactly the contrary, it holds that the real, objective point of view is one that emphasises its position and the ways of its own involvement in the situation. Partisanship in curatorship is unquestionable.⁶²

By taking the bold step of publically advocating a revised 'Communism', they, thus, not only subverted the neoliberal 'no alternative mantra' but also simultaneously debunked the carefully constructed myth of art institutions as politically neutral bodies. It was this clear assertion of an alternative ideological position that comprised the critical moment of rearticulation that is so often lacking in critical leftist projects.

This methodology may have worked successfully to constitute more critical viewing subjects by giving them critical distance from the ideological pull and authority of the 'white cube,' but it is open to debate as to whether this strategy worked to actively mobilise these subjects. Several commentators, including Paulo Lefuente, have argued that the exhibition was not sufficiently radical, as it used the same 'business as usual' modernist modes of display.⁶³ Although it is clear that these critiques fail to recognise the specific counter-hegemonic purpose of WHW's choice, they do raise a valid point about the power of the 'white cube' in activating an audience. Lefuente, for example, argued that 'by choosing a conventional Modernist installation, the exhibition became a clear example of how the exhibition form, following its canonical model, does not mobilise the audience at all – regardless of the work it contains'.⁶⁴ The model is, after all, consciously employed in democratic, liberal contexts because it does not harness the 'affective' properties of the exhibition medium, employed so *overtly* by totalitarian regimes to mobilise the viewer towards a specific ideology. This point is particularly

⁶² What, How and for Whom?, 'This is the 11th Istanbul International Biennial curators' text' in What, How and for Whom? (eds.), *What Keeps Mankind Alive?*, *The Texts: 11th International Istanbul Biennial*, Yapi Kredi Publications (Turkey), 2009 p.101.

⁶³ See: Pablo Lafuente, Pip Day and Maria Muhle, 'The 11th Istanbul Biennial Review', *Afterall*, December 2009. Accessible online: <http://www.afterall.org/online/istanbul.biennial> (accessed 29.08.2014).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

important, when considering the counter-hegemonic potential of the 'white cube' model, because Mouffe consistently advocates for the strategic use of affect to stimulate people's political passions.⁶⁵

This raises an important question: without the strategic use of affect to mobilise people around different forms of collective identification, could the 'white cube' ever be utilised to further a different political agenda to the maintenance of the neoliberal status quo?⁶⁶ We will come to WHW's own attempt to utilise affect, within the confines of their 'white cube' framework, momentarily. However, regardless of their success in this respect, it is clear from the research presented in chapter one, that it was absolutely essential for WHW to have used this model, in order to challenge the perception that public art institutions *are* and *ought* to be neutral and objective and to, thus, open up the possibility of a partisan institutional, curatorial practice. In this sense, they transformed the horizon of possibility for politicised curatorial practice forever, by demonstrating that it was indeed possible to use, even an institutional exhibition articulated through the dominant 'white-cube' mode of presentation, to assert an explicit left-wing political position. This step was necessary to pave the way for the possibility of institutional counter-hegemonic exhibition-making that does make overt strategic use of affect, because otherwise such an approach would automatically be discredited as totalitarian.

⁶⁵ Mouffe follows Lacanian principles to argue that it is essential to both recognise and bring into play the affective forces that can create different collective identifications and make them stick, in order to prevent people identifying around essentialist formations such as race, religion or nationality. The use of affect is also advocated as a means of countering the contemporary disaffection with politics. See, for example, See Mouffe's argument about the strength of right-wing populism and the need for 'affective politics' in Julia Korbik and Chantal Mouffe, 'Populism is a Necessity: Interview with Chantal Mouffe, in *The European*, 02.05.2014. Accessible online at: <http://www.theeuropean-magazine.com/chantal-mouffe--4/8420-why-the-eu-needs-populism> (accessed 18.05.2015).

⁶⁶ It is important to remember that the 'white cube' model has historically served different political purposes and was in itself co-opted from the historic avant-garde and the display techniques of counter-exhibitions such as those produced by the Neo-Impressionists in the late nineteenth century, which were intended to disrupt the hegemonic installation models of their day. The 'white cube' model did, for example, effectively serve the Neo-Impressionist anarcho-communist agenda of focussing the individual's attention fully on each individual painting in order to allow the 'dynamogenic' properties of the art to activate all of the viewer's senses. However, the contemporary viewer is, in general, so ambivalent to this installation model, it seems unlikely that it could be utilised to mobilise an audience around a specific political agenda without either an affective strategy being brought into play or an overtly partisan, reasoned and rational thesis being presented.



Fig. 21. 11th Istanbul Biennial press conference, SES Theatre, Istanbul, November 2008, directed by Oliver Frlić. Pictured, from left to right: Sabina Sabolović, Nataša Ilić, Ivet Curlin, and Ana Dević (the designer and publicist Dejan Krši is also part of the collective but is not pictured here). This photograph appears with the kind permission of the Istanbul Foundation for Art and Culture (IKSV) (Photo Credit: Ilgin Erarslan Yanmaz).

WHW also chose to exaggerate their status as authors in order to underscore that the exhibition is always a constructed, partisan and subjective work. In their original press conference, for example, rather than speaking from behind a desk, or from podiums, they addressed the press as a Brechtian piece of agit-prop theatre. Their performance both resolutely announced their presence and affirmed their political intent as they literally ‘took a stand’ on four chairs, dressed all in black before a dramatic red curtain. This performance exaggerated and parodied the power position of the curator – calling into question the idea that the curator should take a ‘backseat’ and, indeed, the need to decentre curatorial authorship at all.⁶⁷ In other places the intervention was subtler. In their introductory text to the Biennial reader, for example, they used its title to affirm their status as authors: ‘This is the 11th International Istanbul Biennial Curators’ Text’.⁶⁸ They utilised this small detail in order to underline that there *are always people*

⁶⁷ The four curators appeared on stage simultaneously, reciting the address that is normally given by a curator to introduce a biennial. The performance mocked the need for “glamour” in an art event, as well as questioning stereotypes about the power position of a curator, which in this unusual case is an all-female collective. The event took place in the Ses Theater in Istanbul and was developed in collaboration with Croatian theater director Oliver Frlić. WHW state: ‘We four curators tried to enact this position in a short performance during the first Biennial press conference. Instead of releasing the conventional press release format, we performed our concept. We tried to express “the truth of our situation,” as Brecht would call it, by blurring the distinction between curator, artist, and audience, as well as the structure of biennial exhibitions. Our reference to Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt* (estrangement effect) is of course obvious’. See: Michelle Dizon, ‘Conversation with What, Why and for Whom?’ in *X-TRA Contemporary Art Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 3, Spring 2010. Available online here: <http://x-traonline.org/article/conversation-with-what-how-and-for-whom/> (accessed 14.02.2015).

⁶⁸ What, How and for Whom?, ‘This is the 11th Istanbul International Biennial curators’ text’ in What, How and for Whom? (eds.), *What Keeps Mankind Alive?, The Texts: 11th International Istanbul Biennial*, Yapi Kredi Publications (Turkey), 2009 p. 101.

behind the production of an exhibition, not just an apparently 'neutral' and authoritative institution.



Fig. 22. Museum of American Art – Belgrade, 11th Istanbul Biennial, 2009, © Photo: Jaana Pruss

Within the limited framework of the classic white cube exhibition, WHW also made use of the spatial and visual properties of the exhibition medium. They enacted *Verfremdungseffekt* strategies to make the familiar strange, and to subtly bring out the 'affective' dimension of politics that Mouffe argues is essential to stimulate peoples' political passions – enough to move them to action. As well as articulating impassioned political statements, they used both colour and bold graphics, in order to 'puncture' the neutral frame of the 'white cube'. In particular, they made great use of minimal applications of the colour red – symbolic of leftist politics – to highlight political statements and draw attention to information that is normally concealed.⁶⁹ The curators themselves also made direct visual interventions in the gallery space, such as stencilling the phrase 'turn left' on the floor at places where it was not possible to make this turn. However, this estrangement was not at the expense of the 'legibility' of the exhibition, which was consistently reinforced through their bold and clear articulated conceptual framework. As Gail Day et al. noted, in stark contrast to the

⁶⁹ This included peppering the floor of each space of the exhibition with bright red fliers by Sanja Ivekovic that contained key extracts from *Turkish Report* (09, 2009), which chronicled the abuse and honour killings of Turkish women.

others I have analysed, this exhibition was exceptional in its coherence.⁷⁰ Hence, the readability of the exhibition actually served to imbue the audience with greater intellectual agency as it allowed visitors to get a better sense of the exhibition as a whole statement and thus to react critically to it.

2.3 The dimension of antagonism

Mouffe argues that the institutional art exhibition can be reconfigured to institute an 'agonistic public space', where different social antagonisms are actively made visible, and brought into conflict with each other.⁷¹ For Mouffe, the art museum exhibition could offer a space for a unique form of political discourse (not currently facilitated by any other kind of public institution), where distinctly antagonistic political positions could be openly voiced and debated, in accordance with democratic principles.

For Mouffe, there can be no productive 'agonistic dialogues' without the crucial 'dimension of antagonism' and 'properly political questions always involve decisions which require a choice between conflicting alternatives'.⁷² She makes clear that an agonistic space must be constructed from a position of 'radical negativity' that assumes there can never be a 'unified' public nor a 'society beyond division and power'.⁷³ The implication of following this logic is that the curator must recognise that social antagonism can never be eliminated and should, therefore, not attempt to adopt a conciliatory role. Instead, they should attempt to harness the energy and passion of this dissensus to generate a productive and 'properly political' dialogue, capable of bringing about social transformations. In practice, this means that the curator must seek to actively 'stage conflict' between truly differentiated positions, rather than limiting the debate to 'art world' insiders who tend to hold similar progressive liberal

⁷⁰ See: Gail Day, Steve Edwards and David Mabb, 'What Keeps Mankind Alive? The Eleventh International Istanbul Biennial: Once More on Aesthetics and Politics', *Historical Materialism*, 18, 2010, p.150.

⁷¹ Mouffe states: 'By staging a confrontation between conflicting positions, museums and art institutions could make a decisive contribution to the proliferation of new public spaces open to agonistic forms of participation where radical democratic alternatives to neoliberalism could, once again, be imagined and cultivated'. See: Chantal Mouffe, 'Museum as Agonistic Spaces', *Artforum International*, 'The Museum.Revisited' Vol. 48, No. 10, Summer 2010 p. 326.

⁷² Mouffe states: 'Political questions are not mere technical issues to be solved by experts. Properly, political questions always involve decisions, which require a choice between conflicting alternatives. This incapacity to think 'politically' is, to a great extent, due to the uncontested hegemony of liberalism'. Chantal Mouffe, 'Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices?' in Dr Shep Steiner and Trevor Joyce (Eds.) *Cork Caucus: On Art, Possibility and Democracy*, Revolver, 2005 p.153. In this text Mouffe also differentiates her position from Hannah Arendt's idea of 'agonism' by dismissing it as an 'agonism without antagonism'. She states: 'What I mean is that while Arendt puts great emphasis on human plurality and insists that politics deals with the community and reciprocity of human beings that are different, she never acknowledges that this plurality is at the origin of antagonistic conflicts. According to her, to think politically is to develop the ability to see things from a multiplicity of perspectives. As her reference to Kant and his idea of 'enlarged thought' testifies, her pluralism is not fundamentally different from the liberal one because it is inscribed in the horizon of an inter-subjective agreement.' pp.159-160.

⁷³ Chantal Mouffe, *Critique as counter-Hegemonic Intervention*, EIPCP, April, 2008. Available online at: <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0808/mouffe/en> (accessed 08/02/2013).

views. However, as we have seen, the trend in contemporary curatorial practice is for curators to negate their own political views and position themselves as neutral facilitators. This approach may be disempowering, as it disingenuously positions the institutional art exhibition as an ideologically neutral and objective space. However, it becomes particularly problematic when the art included (or specifically commissioned) also fails to articulate strong and clearly differentiated political positions, or when people feel excluded from the discussion. The examples that follow reveal a general reluctance amongst public art institutions to accommodate this crucial dimension of antagonism within their exhibitions. They highlight a critical problem with Mouffe's affirmative positioning of institutional art exhibitions as potential spaces for the development of a radical and 'agonistic' political discourse.

Utopia Station was clearly intended to provide a structure for democratic collective discussion that could accommodate conflicting visions, views, and ideologies without any intention of consolidating them into a singular position. Yet, whilst the rhetoric positions the *Station* as an embodiment of agonistic space, the reality was shown to be very different for the press, academics, and visitors who made public their experience of visiting the 'station'. These different accounts reveal that the crucial dimension of antagonism was absent.

The lack of 'antagonism' and political debate was a direct consequence of the failure of the 'Utopia Station' curators to inspire the production of artworks that articulated strong political positions, or clear visions of utopia. The curators were clear that they deliberately intended to 'leave the definition of Utopia to others', for fear that they would create a hierarchy of viewpoints and, thus, stifle democratic debate.⁷⁴ This tactic might well have worked if any of the commissioned artists, or invited responses to the poster call, actually offered any lucid vision of what a future utopia might be. However, this was not the case. In the whole of *Utopia Station*, then, the only clear political statements were confined to the programme of events in the opening days of the show— where Edouard Glissant presented on the subject of 'Utopia', and Eyal Weizman led a discussion on single state identity in Palestine.⁷⁵ Indeed, the most overt political statements, in any of the posters, comprised vague anti-war and 'pro-peace'

⁷⁴ Molly Nesbit, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Rijkrit Tiravanija, 'What is a Station?' *Dreams and Conflict: The Dictatorship of the Viewer 50th. International Art Exhibition*, La Biennale di Venezia, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003, p.330.

⁷⁵ See the programme of events available online at <http://www.e-flux.com/projects/utopia/schedule.html> (accessed 013.02.13).

statements, such as Marco Moretti and Wilson Diaz's uninspiring 'no war' branding exercise, Yoko Ono's familiar 'Imagine Peace' poster, and Dara Birbaum's derivative reproduction of Nicholas Roerich's original 'Banner of Peace' (see figs. 20-22). By defining 'Utopia' as a future without conflict, these 'anti-war' and 'pro-peace' statements contradicted Mouffe's requirement to acknowledge the 'irreducibility of conflict', and the dimension of antagonism within human social relations.

The images originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The images of the posters were sourced from: <http://www.e-flux.com/projects/utopia/>

Figs. 22-24. Poster contributions to the Utopia Station project by, Marco Moretti and Wilson Diaz (left), Yoko Ono (centre), Dara Birbaum (right).

The curators' refusal to unify or assimilate different views into one central mandate, mirrored the decentred pluralistic stance of the World Social Forum, which the project exhibition ultimately became a part of. At both the Venice and WSF incarnations of the project, the lack of any clear position, or mandate, was ultimately disempowering, as it gave the viewer nothing to react against— to agree, or disagree, with. Thus, the curator's refusal to define what their vision of 'utopia' was, or to tie it to any particular political movement or ideology, had the effect of de-ideologising utopia, and suggesting all visions for social change are fanciful and ill-defined. This, paradoxically, reinforced the idea propagated by neoliberal ideologues, that there *is* no genuine alternative to neoliberal capitalism.⁷⁶

Furthermore, far from the 'forum for dissensus' – that the organisers conjure up in the official catalogue – the 'station' was described as having a convivial party atmosphere,

⁷⁶ Linda Nochlin affirms my point that the majority of the posters did not actively and directly engage in the subject of Utopia when she states: 'I think it is fair to say that few of the works on view engage directly with the idea of utopia that inspired the show. In some cases, utopia might present itself through a sort of willed free association: For example, if you had seen Varda's wonderful film *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse* (2000), you might connect her potatoes to the theme of gleaning and the ecological ideal of living on leftovers, a utopian notion of sorts. But on the whole, the utopian idea was implicit rather than explicit, figurative rather than literal'. Linda Nochlin, 'Less than More', in *Art Forum*, September 2003.

during the opening events.⁷⁷ Once the press had left, this almost immediately gave way to a scene reminiscent of ‘the morning after the night before’, with litter strewn over the lawn, and the installations deserted.⁷⁸ A contributing factor, to the convivial atmosphere, was that both the curatorial structure, and the specific artists commissioned to produce work, tied the project to ‘relational aesthetics’. Whatever the artists and proponents of this type of work might claim, it is incompatible with the type of antagonistic democracy that Mouffe advocates.⁷⁹ Indeed, Claire Bishop has even used the work produced by Rijkrit Tiravanija and Liam Gillick for *Utopia Station* to draw attention to the disingenuousness of claiming that relational aesthetics is a viable form of counter-hegemonic critique or agonistic practice. She argues that, if anything, it is consistent with consensus politics and the ‘end of ideology’ thesis.⁸⁰

Bishop contends, for example, that Tiravanija’s work de-ideologises the concept of ‘utopia’ by reducing it to the provision of communal activities for a private group of individuals whose commonality revolves only around their gallery going status. As the photograph below demonstrates (see fig. 25), Gillick’s bench structure also seemed designed to accommodate a harmonious and consensual dialogue, limited to only those permitted to join the ‘inner circle’.⁸¹ Moreover, art historian Natilee Herren noted that it was unsurprising, given the lack of atmosphere or direction, that visitors chose not to take up the invitation to sit on the benches and start up a spontaneous

⁷⁷ The curators describe *Utopia Station* as a forum for dissensus in Molly Nesbit, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Rijkrit Tiravanija, ‘What is a Station?’ in *Dreams and Conflict: The Dictatorship of the Viewer (50th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia)*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003, p.330.

⁷⁸ For a description of the switch in atmosphere after the opening night see: Natilee Herren, ‘Utopia Station: Manufacturing the Multitude, *PART: Journal of the CUNY PhD Program in Art History*, No.12, CUNY, New York. Available online at: <http://part-archive.finitude.org/part12/articles/harren.html> (accessed 08.02.15). A video which captures the atmosphere of the opening days of *Utopia Station* project is available online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ww_RZ-PyYrc (accessed 12.02.15).

⁷⁹ Nicolas Bourriaud claims, for example, that, ‘contemporary art is definitely developing a political project when it endeavors to move into the relational realm’. See: Nicolas Bourriaud, *Les Presses du Réel Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon, 2002, p. 17.

⁸⁰ Bishop contends that, although Gillick in particular, may publically express support for Mouffe’s agonism and the value of conflict and antagonism to political transformation, a close reading of his writing and his work reveals that in reality he advocates the opposite and argues for compromise, negotiation and consensus as political solutions. About Gillick’s practice she states: ‘Logically, this pragmatism is tantamount to abandonment of failure of ideals; his work is the demonstration of compromise, rather than an articulation of a problem... ultimately less a democratic microtopia than a form of ‘third way’ politics’. Furthermore, she points out that, although Tiravanija and his supporters, make rhetorical nods to his work being a radical form of democratic politics, it ultimately abandons the idea that there is scope for social change or political transformation beyond dialogue. See: Claire Bishop, ‘Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics’, *October*, Vol. 110, Autumn 2004, p.69.

⁸¹ Liam Gillick’s own discussion of *Utopia Station*, is ironically the only text by any of those actively involved who critique the project in terms of its contribution to his ‘progressive leftist politics’. Though Bishop directly equates his practice with consensus third-way politics, he undermines this characterisation when he speaks of his discomfort with the framing the project around the word ‘utopia’ – a word that he has consciously avoided being associated with as he believes it presupposes that what is proposed is unrealisable or untenable and thus plays into the hands of the neoliberal ideologues. However, his justification of his involvement in the project, by arguing that the curators were actually harnessing a multitude of different positions in order to counter the use the word ‘Utopia’ by neoliberal pragmatists to subvert any ‘art movement, architectural moment, political system, or communal proposition that doesn’t operate in the terms of global capital’ is undermined by the lack of clear positions expressed in the artworks, texts and posters at the station, including in his own work. This is recognised by Bishop who refers to his characterisations of his work in terms of vagueness and partiality. See: Liam Gillick, ‘For a... functional utopia? A review of a position’ in Paul O’Neill (ed.), *Curating Subjects*, De Appel, Amsterdam, 2007 pp. 123-136.

political discussion with strangers.⁸² The kind of social relation facilitated by *Utopia Station*'s Venice edition – centred on only a specific type of public, and being limited to a particular 'world' – can never be 'agonistic'. It is too general, and too undifferentiated, to generate those moments of confrontation between antagonistic positions, that Mouffe deems essential.

The photograph originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The photograph was sourced from <http://art.vassar.edu/bios/monesbit.html>

Fig. 25. Hans Ulrich Obrist, Molly Nesbit and Edouard Glissant at *Utopia Station*, Venice, June 2003. Photo by Pierre Huyghe.

The model of collective curating, that Bonami realised in *Dreams and Conflict*, provides another example, of the futility of attempting to constitute an agonistic public space without bringing together antagonistic positions. The problem with Bonami's approach was neatly articulated by a large banner designed by Polish artist Piotr Uklanski, at Bonami's request, and hung from the façade of the office of municipal culture on the Grand Canal (fig. 24). This banner, clearly based on the Atelier Populaire's *La Lutte Continue* (fig. 25), featured the silhouettes of the 11 curators against a bright red

⁸² Herren states: 'A stage and public address system near the entranceway signalled that *Utopia Station* was a place for use, not just visual delectation. Circular benches were offered as seats for a proscenium-oriented audience or for intimate group discussions. But the invitation to utilize this equipment, however, was not accepted by many people outside the program organized by the curators'. See: Natilee, Herren, 'Utopia Station: Manufacturing the Multitude, *PART: Journal of the CUNY PhD Program in Art History*, No.12, CUNY, New York. Available online at: <http://part-archive.finitude.org/part12/articles/herren.html> (accessed 08.02.15).

background. Whereas the Atelier Populaire poster shows the silhouettes of workers as one undifferentiated, unified and collective mass, Uklanski's banner stressed the autonomy of each individual curator – isolated, atomistic and completely uninterested in each other.



Fig. 26. (Left) Piotr Uklanski, *Untitled* (Banner for the 50th Venice Biennale), 2003. Fig. 27. (Right) Atelier Populaire, *La Lutte Continue*, 1968.

This lack of contact was mirrored in the actual exhibition. Although the curator's individual autonomy may have been enhanced by the fact that the Biennale was physically divided into separate sections, this structure meant that, like in the poster, none of their displays ever came into contact with one another — let alone into conflict. Moreover, like *Utopia Station*, none of the curators actually defined a clear political position – meaning that there was little to distinguish each section from each other. Hence, whilst Bonami's approach was clearly intended to accommodate a 'plurality' of definitively different positions, their presentations were too homogenous and too cut off from each other to create an antagonistic relation. This mode of organisation could not foment the kind of 'clash of positions' that might begin to spark debate amongst viewers. Although Bonami might have created the environment where antagonistic positions were possible, his lack of direction resulted in the very kind of homogeneity that he intended to counter. For all the revolutionary rhetoric, this can no more be argued to be a model for agonistic pluralism than it can be viewed as a radical form of curatorial communism.⁸³

⁸³ The reviews were starkly divided in this respect. Whereas for Rirkrit Tiravanija, Bonami's gesture was politically radical in that he did 'what many others will never do, and that is to give up your power to truly work in a collaborative structure', for Griffin this curatorial model was actually symbolic of a de-radicalised leftist malaise where coherence, unity and universality was deemed impossible and no longer even sought. I would argue that it can only be considered as radical in relation to Venice as a specific institution that has not previously employed such a model and as a direct reaction to the previous edition curated by Harold Szeemann. See: Tim Griffin, 'Left Wanting', *Art Forum*, September 2003 and Rirkrit Tiravanija in conversation with Tony Adler: Tony Adler, 'Curatorial Misconduct', *The Chicago Reader*, May 6th 2004. Available online at: www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/curatorial-misconduct/Content?oid=915368 (accessed 13.03.2013).

Though these exhibitions may have taken a more genuinely pluralistic approach, I would argue that the WHW strategy — of articulating a clear political position — provided a more effective route to instituting an agonistic public space.⁸⁴ In their introductory essay, WHW distanced themselves from political pluralism, arguing that it could water down the antagonistic dimension of politics to the point that it is no longer political. However, they expressed a view in line with Mouffe's specific vision of agonistic pluralism when they state:

In present class society, politics without antagonism is illusory. The culturalisation of politics, promoted by neo-liberal 'diversity' which allows for the euphoric celebration of a range of marketable differences (usually touted as 'pluralism') must be replaced by the *politicisation of culture*.⁸⁵

Here, WHW underline their intention to focus on engendering the 'crucial dimension of antagonism', by taking a definite and singular position. Though their exhibition was, indeed, a leftist polemic that was directed wholly by their own specific political view, it was not intended to be an authoritarian closed statement; rather it was intended as a mechanism that would encourage the emergence of a plurality of different viewpoints.

Despite its absence in the discourse surrounding political curatorial practice, Mouffe has repeatedly argued that it is essential to make use of the polarity of 'left' and 'right' in order to revitalise political commitment, enable people to form alliances and thus join up their counter-hegemonic struggles.⁸⁶ Thus WHW's radical leftist position was in Mouffe's terms, a particularly effective means of stimulating political discussion as it provided a concrete alternative to neoliberal politics that served as a yardstick that the viewer could locate their own position in relation to.

As Mouffe asserts, following Henry Staten's idea of 'the constitutive outside', our identities and subject positions are never fixed and we are only able to define ourselves in terms of a 'lack' – who we are not, or what we have not. Binary oppositions help us

⁸⁴ The biennial as an institution unfolding different exhibition projects over time was positioned as a *transitory* agonistic public space that could be occupied by a different voice in each separate edition. The exhibition was thus freed up to serve as an articulatory instrument that could instigate debate precisely because it took a definite side.

⁸⁵ What, How and for Whom?, 'This is the 11th Istanbul International Biennial curators' text' in What, How and for Whom? (eds.), What Keeps Mankind Alive?, *The Texts: 11th International Istanbul Biennial*, Yapi Kredi Publications (Turkey), 2009 p.120.

⁸⁶ She states: If I insist so much on the need to re-vivify the idea of the Left and the distinction between Left and Right, it is because I think an agonistic struggle requires those conflicting views. In fact, the field of traditional democratic politics could and should become an agonistic public space. It is not at the moment, because social democratic parties are unable to envisage an alternative to the neo-liberal order. Chantal Mouffe, 'Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices?' in Dr Shep Steiner and Trevor Joyce (Eds.) *Cork Caucus: On Art, Possibility and Democracy*, Revolver, 2005 p.164

to locate our position in the world, and in relation to others. In other words, we are much more able to fully form, and assert, our own view, if there is something clearly stated to relate to, agree, or disagree, with.⁸⁷ Hence, the use of polemic questions in the exhibition space (and posed on posters pasted throughout the city), such as ‘Socialism or Barbarianism?’ – framed as if there was only one valid choice – served to open up avenues of debate. The curators purposefully used such combative questions to antagonise the audience, to stimulate their political passions, and to draw out an emotive response. They, thus, used their own position to capitalise on the ‘affective dimension’ of politics (as Mouffe advocates), and, unlike the other exhibitions analysed here, deliberately used the ‘irreducible dimension of antagonism’ to engender a properly political discourse that could effectively draw the visitor into an agonistic dialogue.

The steps that WHW took to affirm their authorship, demystify and re-ideologise the ‘white cube’, also effectively helped to deconstruct the public perception of the exhibition as an objective and authoritative space, where what is presented cannot be disputed or opposed. If the visitor clearly understands that the exhibition is the subjective articulation of *people*, they are much more likely to understand that what is said is only one perspective (amongst many), conceive of that perspective as an opinion, and, therefore, actively question both the legitimacy of the discourse and the authority presenting it. Although reviews of the exhibition did not indicate that the exhibition itself became a forum of heated political debate, the intended purpose was more to engage each individual viewer in a confrontation that forced them to reconsider their own political values, and imagine a better alternative future. The intention was to create a model of exhibition-making that could ‘turn consumers into producers’, who take it upon *themselves* to construct *more* agonistic public spaces, in different communities – whether in the city itself, in the pages of the press, or online.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Mouffe uses Henry Staten’s idea of the ‘constitutive outside to explain the relationality of identity: ‘The aim is to highlight the fact that the creation of an identity always implies the establishment of a difference, difference which is often constructed on the basis of a hierarchy, for example between form and matter, black and white, man and women, etc. Once we have understood that every identity is relational and that the affirmation of a difference is a precondition for the existence of any identity, i.e. the perception of something ‘other’ which constitutes its ‘exterior’, we can understand why politics is concerned with the constitution of a ‘we’ which can only exist by the demarcation of a ‘them’.’ See: Dr Shep Steiner and Trevor Joyce (Eds.) *Cork Caucus: On Art, Possibility and Democracy*, Revolver, 2005, p.164.

⁸⁸ Mouffe argues that agonistic public spaces do not have to have a physical form: ‘But they do not need to be physical, they might be virtual too. An agonistic public space does not need to be geographically located. For example, you can create an agonistic form of discussion through the Internet or in many other forms. Space does not need to refer to geographical location. We could say that it is a way to establish a form of communication among people, but that can be done in different ways. It can be done by putting them together in a specific place; it can be done through the press. In fact, I would think, the press would be a very

WHW, thereby, had a more direct strategy of empowering the visitor to dispute their position, form their own opinions and ideas, and to, thus, 'foment new subjectivities, critical of neoliberal consensus politics', and mobilised to construct their own agonistic spaces outside of the institutional frame.⁸⁹

Two instances of censorship at the 28th and 29th Sao Paulo Bienal, further problematised the notion that public art institutions are willing, and able, to open themselves up to diversified antagonistic views, from wider society. Can such institutions, so historically concerned with regulating boundaries and classification systems, really let go of their desire to organise and control knowledge, and define who is allowed to speak and be heard? Does their position as state-funded institutions allow them to extend the opportunity to state a partisan political position to artists or the general public? Both the censorship of Argentinean artist, Roberto Jacoby's work at the 29th Bienal, and the ill-treatment of a group of local graffiti artists at the 28th, emphasised how limited the institution's ability to tolerate partisan views, or dissenting voices, really is. Moreover, the genuine redemptive attempt at the 29th edition – to give the same group of graffiti artists a voice within the exhibition – only worked to underscore how the institutional exhibition medium can delimit the critical potency of subversive works. These examples highlight the double-bind that publicly funded institutions face, when attempting to offer a space for radical democratic discourse.

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Figs. 28 and 29. Pichação being arrested for tagging the walls of 'the void' at the 28th São Paul Bienal, 2008. Photos: Choque Photos.

important area to act within.' 'Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices?' in Dr Shep Steiner and Trevor Joyce (Eds.) *Cork Caucus: On Art, Possibility and Democracy*, Revolver, 2005, p.164.

⁸⁹ Mouffe states that this is the central means by which art museums could play a role in the counter-hegemonic struggle in her article for Art Forum: 'It is by putting the Museum in the context of radical democratic politics that I wish to address the question of its role today, considering in particular ways in which art institutions could foment new subjectivities critical of neoliberal consensus'. Chantal Mouffe, 'Museum as Agonistic Spaces', *Artforum International*, 'The Museum Revisited' Vol. 48, No. 10, Summer 2010 p. 329.

The photograph originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The photograph was sourced from *Catalogue of the 29th Bienal de Sao Paulo: There is Always a Cup of Sea to Sail in*, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2010.



Fig. 30. Pixacao SP, Photograph and Fig. 31. Installation Shot from the 29th Sao Paulo Bienal. Photograph by Lynn Wray

During the opening night of the 28th Bienal, the graffiti group known as Pixacao SP, tagged slogans such as ‘this is what art is... under dictatorship’, on the walls of the empty second floor space – in response to the curators’ call for direct interventions in the space.⁹⁰ The group were protesting against the lack of visibility of young Brazilian artists, in the exhibition, and against the institutionalisation and commodification of radical art forms, by the art market. As artist Eli Sudbrack argued, the questions that the pichadores tried to raise, should have chimed with the curators’ desire to both democratise the space and engender a discourse around the purpose of the Bienal. Entering into a dialogue with the group, and thus allowing marginalised and antagonistic voices to be voiced and heard (within the existing discourse of the institutional space) could have legitimated their counter-hegemonic strategy as a form of agonistic practice. However, instead of entering into a dialogue with the taggers, the 40 pichadores were promptly removed, heavy-handily, from the space, by Bienal security. One member of the group was arrested and detained in a prison cell for more than 40 days.⁹¹ The reaction of the Bienal, towards the taggers, only served to highlight the strict boundary lines that police exactly what is permitted, and what is not

⁹⁰See extended discussion in Christina Roiter, “Pichacao at the Sao Paulo Bienal: Art or Crime?” in *The Art Section*. <http://zoolander52.tripod.com/theartsection3.1/id1.html> (accessed 14.04.2011).

⁹¹The story of Caroline Pivetta da Mota’s arrest became a media sensation in Sao Paulo, many members of the public reacted angrily to the young women’s detainment and *Stadium Magazine* published a manifesto calling for her immediate release which was republished in numerous online blogs. Pivetta da Mota’s Defense lawyer Cristiane Souza de Carvalho described the hypocrisy of the Bienal’s position, reflecting the views of many local people: ‘The curators had said in previous interviews that they would like the people to interact with the emptiness of the space. And that was what the group did. There is also a discussion in the lawsuit relating to the case if Pichação is art or crime. For many youngsters, the only way to manifest themselves is with a tin of paint in their hands’. The Bienal Foundation refused to acknowledge any responsibility for the events, declining to comment other than to state that it was a criminal offence that had to be dealt with by the courts and did nothing to intervene in the Pivetta da Mota’s plight. Quote from Christina Roiter, “Pichacao at the Sao Paulo Bienal: Art or Crime?” in *The Art Section*. <http://zoolander52.tripod.com/theartsection3.1/id1.html> (accessed 14.04.2011).

permitted, in institutional exhibitions. It illustrated the gulf between discourses around democratisation, and the true democratisation of institutional space, which requires more than the curator's designation of that space as public.

The curator of the 29th edition, Moacir dos Anjos, addressed this issue in a talk about the Bienal programme at the Hayward Gallery, London in 2010. He reflected on the Bienal Foundation's handling of the group during the 28th edition: 'the Bienal reacted very badly to that; it resulted only in a police case instead of trying to reflect upon it'.⁹² He also recognised that it was very important to include Pixação, as a Brazilian specific, counter-hegemonic art form in the 29th edition, as a clear example of their conception of the relationship between art and politics.⁹³ He stated:

We decided to invite the taggers that had invaded the Sao Paulo Bienal to talk, to discuss and to see how we could discuss the taggers from the perspective of the Sao Paulo Bienal. So we invited them to show some documentation. We weren't interested in giving them a wall inside the exhibition to tag, as that's not pixação, it's something else; it's a graphic description of what they do outside of the buildings.⁹⁴

Here, Anjos highlights the problem of representing pixação, which is essentially characterised by its existence outside institutional frameworks, inside an institutional space. With the final installation comprising of a wall of tagged invites and photographs and films of the taggers in action, this was, however, never resolved during the 29th Bienal.⁹⁵ His statement also reveals an important tension: that the Bienal was seeking to represent pixação from their own institutional position, rather than allowing the pichadores to represent their own art form as they chose. Dos Anjos positioned the

⁹² Moacir dos Anjos, *Brazil Report: Art and Politics*, Hayward Gallery, London, 28th June 2010.

⁹³ It began as a form of public response to political slogans from professional politicians that were painted directly on the walls of the street, appropriating the same methods, but painting with tar or 'piche' to stress that their voice was from the street itself. It is thus used by the urban poor confined to the periphery of the city, to claim both their right to ownership of their city and their right to be heard, by taking the most appropriate symbols of this contested wealth, the buildings of the cities richest inhabitants, as the very surface on which to play out this protest against inequality. Pixação thus represents a direct challenge to the political, legal and cultural frameworks that regulate how we live and keep this inequality alive, by refusing to operate within its limits. The pichadores also challenge the perceived limits of their physical environment and therefore open up the parameters of, on what and where art can be made. They often compete to tag the highest and most inaccessible spaces within the city, using free-climbing and abseiling to reach their locations and thus redefine the boundaries of what can be considered an artistic surface. They practice pixação precisely because it is illegal and operates outside of the hegemonic confines of the art and political worlds, which conspire to maintain the status quo. They believe that only by working outside of these institutional frameworks can they make change happen, as the outside is the only space from which the periphery is permitted to speak. Their viewpoint in this regard, thus, however, completely contradicts the idea of counter-hegemonic critique from within that the curators have subscribed to.

⁹⁴ Moacir dos Anjos, *Brazil Report: Art and Politics*, Hayward Gallery, London, 28th June 2010.

⁹⁵ However, it did serve to highlight these tensions. The curators acknowledged the limitations of their strategy within the catalogue and wall texts, 'these documental strategies are a poor substitute for pixação itself, which can only truly exist in the urban space it disputes.... underlining the fact that the institutional field is never capable of housing or fully understanding all the possible manifestations of art'. See: *Catalogue of the 29th Bienal de Sao Paulo: There is Always a Cup of Sea to Sail in*, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2010, p. 147.

curators as mediators in a struggle, between the hegemonic institutions (the Sao Paulo Bienal Foundation, the art world and the press) and the counter-hegemonic outsiders (the pichadores).⁹⁶

Dos Anjos' gesture of inclusion was interpreted by the pichadores as a hegemonic attempt to institutionalise an uncontrollable art form, in order to remove its subversive and disruptive power.⁹⁷ By gaining explicit permission to enter the confines of the Bienal, they were conscious that this simultaneously withdrew their power to subvert or critique the Bienal, from the position of outsider. The further irony was that, despite their strategy of inclusion, the curators were still powerless to prevent the institution reacting in exactly the same way as they did in the 28th edition when the group orchestrated another subversive action in the building. An infamous pixação artist, known as Rafael Pixobomb, broke through the netting that contained Nuno Ramos' installation 'White Flag', and tagged it with the words 'free the vulture'. Despite the rhetoric about using such incidences as starting points for discussion, the police were called, Pixobomb was arrested and the graffiti was immediately removed. They, therefore, simultaneously criminalised the act of pixação, in one part of the building, and included it as a valid form of expression in another. This reveals both the limits of the institutional space's ability to accommodate unmediated critical voices and the guest curators' power to subvert the host institutions authority.

Jacoby's installation/performance, *The soul never thinks without an image (El alma nunca piensa sin imagen)* was a propaganda campaign for the left-wing Brazilian presidential candidate Dilma Rousseff, enacted in real-time, within the Bienal building.⁹⁸ He had invited a group of artists called the 'Argentinean Brigade for Dilma' to manage the space he had been allocated for the exhibition. The group then openly proceeded to spread propaganda in favour of the Workers' Party (PT) candidate. They

⁹⁶ Dos Anjos stated: 'It's very difficult to cope with different expectations from the institutions and from the taggers, who are all the time accusing us of using them to project ourselves. Other times they are very happy they have been treated with dignity and have the opportunity to show their work and be better understood by other people. It is very difficult to try to find a third way, that's not out there but not inside either. We are trying to put the taggers in an in between space, between the street and the institution. We are trying to learn with the situation'. Moacir dos Anjos, *Brazil Report: Art and Politics*, Hayward Gallery, London, 28th June 2010.

⁹⁷ According to Dos Anjos they repeatedly stated that they were concerned that the Bienal would be using them to meet their own political agenda and give an illusion of inclusivity. Moacir dos Anjos, *Brazil Report: Art and Politics*, Hayward Gallery, London, 28th June 2010.

⁹⁸ According to the Bienal he apparently had tricked his way into the Bienal, by pretending that his work was only symbolic – that it was a propaganda campaign for an imaginary or fictional, rather than real political candidate. The catalogue entry reveals the curators understanding, or misunderstanding, of his work: Jacoby invites Argentinean artists to collectively produce T-shirts, badges, posters, pamphlets and souvenirs for a hypothetical political campaign to be promoted at the Bienal... In this Brazilian presidential election year, the work becomes an opportunity for reflection, albeit indirect and fictional, on the forms of party political propaganda.

wore T-shirts branded with Dilma's name, played videotapes of her political campaign and handed out flyers in support of her campaign, to Bienal visitors. The space also featured a 'machine for the production of antagonisms' and a speaker's platform for debate and dialogue. It was dominated by 'an image'; a large panel that was split down the middle by two photographs of the same size, one of Dilma Rousseff and the other of José Serra, her centre-right rival in Brazil's presidential elections. His work must, therefore, be understood as an exemplary manifestation of Chantal Mouffe's agonistic public space, where antagonisms are openly voiced, and 'properly political questions' are asked, that involve 'a choice between two conflicting alternatives'.

The photographs originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The photograph were sourced from <http://www.art-agenda.com/reviews/politics-and-the-political-at-the-29th-sao-paulo-biennial/>

Two installation views of Roberto Jacoby's 'The soul never thinks without an image (El alma nunca piensa sin imagen)'. Fig 31. (Left) On the opening Night – Featuring Argentinean Brigade for Dilma and Roberto Jacoby. Fig. 32. (Right) The installation after the opening night with the central image of Dilma and her rival censored (Roberto Jacoby's, the Curator's and the Press response to the Censorship were later stuck to the wall on A4 sheets of paper).

Through this installation/performance, Jacoby wanted to demonstrate that politics is located in the here and now. He forced the Bienal, as an institution, to become involved in a discussion (that was at odds with their conceptualisation of the relationship between art and politics), by suggesting that, today, in Brazil, there is more at stake, and, ultimately, more hope in the realm of parliamentary politics than in the contemporary art space. His artwork was, therefore, also intended as a critique for what he sees as the depoliticisation of art, through the ceaseless promotion of work that can only be considered political, on an aesthetic level, by the institutional mainstream. Hence, he presents a cutting challenge to the current hegemonic discourse that denies that there is a place for the party political (or even specific political positions) in contemporary art.

Despite this work perfectly materialising the curators' aims of breaking down hierarchies, his work did not stay intact for long, and was censored even before the exhibition opened. The 'Argentinean Brigade for Dilma' was quickly removed from the space; their voices silenced and the images, of Dilma and Serra, censored and covered up with sheets of paper. According to an open letter published by the Sao Paulo Bienal Foundation on the Bienal website, the work was censored in response to a request by the Electoral Attorney General's office, who stated that the work constituted an 'electoral offense', as in Brazil it is illegal to distribute propaganda in spaces that are run by public authorities, during election time. In a statement to the press, Agnaldo Farias, explained the Bienal's position: 'we cannot contest the court ruling, because we even run the risk of going to jail'.⁹⁹

However, Roberto Jacoby published a critical response to the Bienal, entitled *São Paulo Is Burning: The Spectre of Politics at the Biennial*, which accused the Bienal curators of being 'cowardly' and of reporting the work to the electoral office themselves. He asked the insightful question: 'what does an established art curator think he is asking for when he invokes the word "politics"?'¹⁰⁰ He also raised the fact that, perversely, his work was featured in the Bienal in another context: he was also part of the collective of artists, sociologists and militants from several Argentinean cities who produced the historic exhibition Tucumán Arde (Tucumán is Burning) in 1968, which was featured as a historic display. This work reacted against the acts of repression carried out by the Argentinean Dictatorship in the sixties, and was censored, as a result, by that government. However, the fact that this work was included where Jacoby's, *The soul never thinks without an image*, was repressed, indicates that the further a work is divorced from its political and social context (and, thus, the further it is removed from the reality of people's everyday life), the better its chances of being permitted by the institution. Needless to say, this situation is at odds with Mouffe's affirmative positioning of the art institution in the development of a new radical, agonistic, democratic engagement.

⁹⁹ See: Octovia Zaya, 'Politics and "The Political" at the 29th São Paulo Biennial' in *Art Agenda*, October 2010. Available online: <http://www.art-agenda.com/reviews/politics-and-the-political-at-the-29th-sao-paulo-biennial/> (accessed 09.12.2010).

¹⁰⁰ The article penned by Jacoby and entitled *Sao Paulo is burning: The Spectre of Politics at the Biennial*, 2010, was reproduced on numerous artists webpages, activist blogs and art magazines throughout the world. See for example: <http://16beavergroup.org/journalisms/2010/09/27/marcelo-sao-paulo-is-burning-the-spectre-of-politics-at-the-biennial/> <http://chtodelat.wordpress.com/2010/09/27/sao-paulo-is-burning-the-spectre-of-politics-at-the-biennial/> (accessed 19.02.2011)

The Bienal – funded in part by the Culture Ministry of the ruling Worker’s Party government – was, clearly, in a difficult position, as it could be accused of using public funds to campaign actively for its own candidate. According to the electoral tribunal, Jacoby’s work constituted an electoral crime that, if prosecuted, could disqualify the institution from receiving public funds in the future. As the Bienal Foundation was in the process of trying to rebuild both their reputation and their financial liquidity, their course of action is certainly understandable. However, it still represents cultural hegemony in action. Yes, it may have been deemed illegal for the Bienal to exhibit this work, but if politicians can practice party politics in the state-funded building that is parliament, and on state-funded TV channels and radio stations, why can artists not demonstrate their party political allegiances within state-funded art institutions? Most people express their own political viewpoints through the party or organisations that they support, so why can artists not do this? If state-funded arts institutions are to exhibit political art exhibitions at all, do they not need to recognise that party political allegiances play a part in the development of an artists’ political consciousness and, therefore, the work that they produce? Jacoby’s project highlights, with great efficacy, the limitations of not only the art institution’s ability to facilitate political discourse, but also the curator’s understanding of the relationship between art and politics.

2.4 A ‘truly public’ space?

The reaction to both the pichadores attempt to intervene in the space, and Jacoby’s work, also raised questions about what constitutes a ‘truly’ public space and whose voices are privileged in public art institutions. It called into question whether these institutions can really offer a ‘public space’, according to the criteria Mouffe sets out? To emphasise what she means by *public* space, Mouffe offers the German term ‘*öffentlichkeit*’, which defines ‘public’ in terms of the public/private opposition. It must be a common, general space – as opposed to a particular and individual space – and it must make things visible and manifest, as opposed to secret. Also, it must be open and accessible, as opposed to closed.¹⁰¹ In her view, it is also absolutely essential that the

¹⁰¹ As *Öffentlichkeit*, the term ‘the public’ is usually opposed to ‘private’ but its meaning differs according to the different contexts in which this opposition public/private is inscribed. We can, broadly speaking, distinguish three main contexts that can be specified on the basis of an opposition: 1) public – as what is common, general, opposed to private as what is particular and individual; 2) public – in the sense of publicity, as what is visible and manifest, opposed to private as what is secret; 3) public – as accessible and open, opposed to private as closed. Those different meanings are of course related, but they do not overlap; one thing can be public in one of the senses, while not in the others. Chantal Mouffe, ‘Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices?’ in Dr Shep Steiner and Trevor Joyce (Eds.) *Cork Caucus: On Art, Possibility and Democracy*, Revolver, 2005 p.152

space be not commercialised in any way, as 'if they are truly agonistic they cannot be commercialised' and 'if they are commercialised they are not agonistic'.¹⁰²

Mouffe also argues that it is critical that any particular groups, positionalities or, indeed, 'the public', are not excluded from participating in the 'agonistic discourse'. This would also mean allowing certain groups that hold values and views that are outside the comfortable secular, liberal, rationalist and cosmopolitan purview, to speak and participate. However, my analysis of all of the exhibitions indicated that Mouffe has a too 'Utopic' perception of art institutions, from the outset, which, though acknowledging their past hegemonic role, fails to grasp just how deep and far any reconfiguration would have to go to become either the truly accommodating space, or the 'sanctuary from commercial interests' that she describes. She fails to recognise the true extent of the relations between public art institutions and capitalistic art markets, through collections and commissions; the private sector, through sponsorship, and partnership deals; and neoliberal government agendas, through the public funding that, ultimately, influences their objectives.¹⁰³

A complex mix of private and public funding now finances most biennials and public art museums. The level of private sponsorship, in major art institutions, ensures that the building and publications are covered in corporate logos. Private sponsors, enticed by government-sponsored tax rebates, for example, now primarily fund the Sao Paulo Bienal.¹⁰⁴ In effect, money is diverted from the public purse, in order to further the interests of private corporations. This demonstrates how, under neoliberalism, private voices are privileged over public voices, even in supposedly 'public' art institutions. Art institutions, therefore, play a part in the corporatisation of public space, privileging commercial interests and corporate voices in the 'public' arena. This further concentrates symbolic and cultural capital in the hands of already powerful capitalists, and, thus, serves to reinforce class hierarchies. In this sense, the vast majority of public art institutions are too corporatised, and too closed off to alternative positions, to be considered a truly public or 'agonistic' space, in the way that Mouffe advocates.

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ Loan agreements, for example, are often made on the basis that a specific loan will add prestige and thus value to the art object and are thus a vital part of the free-market economy and the distribution and accumulation of cultural capital.

¹⁰⁴ The Rouanet law in Brazil allows private corporations to offset a certain percentage of their income tax against cultural investment. In return for this cultural investment the Bienal features the company's logo in the catalogue and in the exhibition space, improving their brand visibility and propagating the idea that these companies are egalitarian and acting in the interests of the public good. In reality, these private corporations are effectively paying nothing for this privilege as the money would have otherwise been paid as tax and effectively belongs to the public purse.

Moreover, there is also a question over whose interests this new alignment of professional curating with leftist politics, best serves. The fact that WHW, for example, were allowed to articulate an explicitly leftist position, from within a major public art institution, is argued, by the Turkish left, to have been tolerated by the institutions of neoliberalism precisely because this ideology successfully maintains its dominance by appealing to the attractive values of individual liberty and freedom of expression.¹⁰⁵ The Biennial has, from the beginning, been a means of persuading Turkish citizens, tourists and, most importantly, the power brokers (who could determine their admittance to the EU), that Turkey is a modern, progressive, democratic and liberal society, with values consistent with the neoliberal majority.¹⁰⁶ The Biennial model, with its capacity to attract diplomats and middle-class tourists, was specifically and strategically utilised as *the* safe space where critical voices could be heard.¹⁰⁷ Critical and politically engaged artists, and curators, were consistently deployed to spell out the message that Turkey *was* tolerant, open and pluralistic.¹⁰⁸ The Biennial, thus, came to serve both the ambitions of the Turkish state and the profit-driven agenda of private corporations: the private companies get a 'platform for the promotion of private commercial interests' and the state gets 'business to sponsor the new idealised representation of the nation-state', in line with European neoliberal values.¹⁰⁹ The invitation of WHW – well-known for their radical leftist position – to curate the 11th Biennial, must, therefore, be understood to be part of a wider agenda to gain admittance to the EU. It could be argued that such enactments of counter-capitalist critique are merely a 'political gesture' or 'ritual performance' that is accommodated precisely because it diverts people from agitating in less controlled spaces, such as city streets and public squares.

Curators have also been accused of nullifying their own attempts to subvert, or counter, the neoliberal hegemony, by adopting neoliberal strategies and by

¹⁰⁵ The liberal state has a long history of using art institutions as safe spaces for publically displaying the possibility of critique and the illusion of a vibrant and free democratic polity to its citizens and this model has been successfully adapted to the neoliberal system of governance.

¹⁰⁶ Art, was identified as a key public arena through which to play out this new vision of Turkey and rid the country of its reputation for cultural conservatism.

¹⁰⁷ For example, in the 2007 exhibition, Kutluğ Ataman and Atom Egoyan were allowed to show the videos *Auroras* and *Testimony*, which addressed the Armenian genocide, though other intellectuals were put on trial for acknowledging that it took place. See: Gail Day, Steve Edwards and David Mabb, 'What Keeps Mankind Alive?': the Eleventh International Istanbul Biennial: Once More on Aesthetics and Politics', *Historical Materialism*, 18, 2010, p.150.

¹⁰⁸ The recent curators that have been selected can all be said to be part of the critical Left. Hou Hanru was invited to curate the 10th Biennial and Charles Esche co-curated the 9th edition with Vasif Kortun.

¹⁰⁹ See: Angela Harutyunyan, Aras Özgün and Eric Goodfield, 'Event and Counter-Event: The Political Economy of the Istanbul Biennial and Its Excesses', *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol. 23, Issue 4, 2011 pp.480-481.

commodifying, or recuperating, artistic and curatorial production. The curators of both the 50th *Venice Biennale* and *Utopia Station*, for example, accepted the significant presence of corporate sponsorship within the venues. This was widely condemned in the international press. The contradiction between the counter-capitalist rhetoric and lived reality was nowhere better illustrated than by the fact that many visitors ignored the ‘art’ and went straight for the official ‘*Utopia Station*’ tote bags, branded with the logo of fashion designer Agnès B.¹¹⁰ As part of the branding exercise, they were reissued at the Frieze Art Fair 2012 as ‘Rirkrit Tiravanija’s official *Utopia Station* tote bag’, and prominently positioned in the building of a future utopia.¹¹¹ The bags served to emphasise the distance between political posturing and doing: they provided a neat way of simultaneously wearing your cultural capital and your ‘political activism’, on your sleeve, without actually having to ascribe to a political position.



Fig. 34. The Re-issued Rirkrit Tiravanija *Utopia Station* tote bag distributed at the first New York, Frieze Art Fair in 2012. Fig. 35. The wall of sponsorship logos dominating the entrance, Antrepo 11th Istanbul Biennial. This photograph appears with the kind permission of Eric Goodfield (Photo credit and copyright: Eric Goodfield).

Furthermore, TJ Demos has highlighted how the type of networked, open-ended structure, and the flexible and cooperative modes of working, that *Utopia Station* enacted, was characteristic of (rather than counter to) the post-Fordist modes of production that underpin the neoliberal economy. He argued that ‘the project courts a paradoxical convergence between its pledge to flexibility and capitalism’s post-industrial character, defined similarly by the indeterminacy of work and life, creative cooperation, and individual freedom’.¹¹² The curators’ adoption of post-Fordist modes

¹¹⁰ Scott Roth Kopf, ‘In the Bag’ in *Art Forum*, September 2003, pp.174-177.

¹¹¹ According to the blurb, rather than being simply an item used to carry stuff, the bag is itself a *Utopia Station*: ‘they allow the visitor to come, to rest, and to bring something to the occasion—as well as to take something away... the bag helps with the transport home. It assumes that everyone will still be en route to a future Utopia’. See the press release available online at: <http://foryourart.com/2012/05/utopia-station-re-issue/> (accessed 02.02.15).

¹¹² See: T.J. Demos, ‘Is Another World Possible? The Politics of Utopia in Recent Exhibition Practice’ in Gavin Grindon (ed), *Art Production and Social Movements*, Autonomedia, New York, 2013, pp.66-67.

of flexible, individualised and networked working practices, is emblematic of a more general trend of unproblematically adopting neoliberal working practices within, supposedly, counter-hegemonic projects. Indeed, the very proliferation of independent curators, demanded by counter-hegemonic projects such as *Utopia Station*, has been enabled by post-Fordist modes of production.¹¹³ However, these types of flexible and temporary exhibition projects, directly contribute to the precarisation of creative workers – the creation of a creative economy where nobody has permanent contracts and has to move from project to project, without a secure income. This, in turn, ignores the impact that such flexible, non-contracted working practices have played in reducing the job security and rights of workers, more generally, and, in particular, their ability to unionise and oppose the policies of neoliberal governments. The use of co-operative, networked modes of working, thus limits the potential for unified collective action.

All of the institutions that hosted the exhibitions analysed here, have pursued policies and strategies complicit with capitalist globalisation – particularly by brokering private sponsorship and loan deals, by the type of economic networks they are entangled in and by their complicity in the precarisation of creative workers. Curators are, of course, trapped in the means of production of their own time, and cannot hope to produce work that is completely independent from capitalist mechanisms – but it is important that they, nonetheless, recognise their dependence on these mechanisms. They must ask: what is it about the future politics that they want to see develop; that is essentially different from that under neoliberalism? What position do they occupy in the future world that they imagine?

Only WHW engaged directly with the contradictions that emerged from their relationship with the host institution, and their sponsors. They, at least, recognised the potential hypocrisy of their relationship with the Biennial institution, and engaged in a dialogue with Turkish activist groups. WHW argued that what was most important was whether or not this source of money prohibited their free speech. They concluded that their position as ‘antagonistic guests’ was not compromised by the sponsorship arrangements.¹¹⁴ They argued that, in any case, there was no such thing as a ‘pure’

¹¹³ Neoliberalism’s particular forms of governance – characterised by David Harvey in terms of Lyotard’s postmodern condition as one of temporary contracts rather than permanent institutions and global network relationships – enabled the rise of nomadic freelance and independent curators who have only short term contracts with the art institution rather than permanent positions. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, p.4.

¹¹⁴ They stated: ‘we feel that in this biennial... we can tell our concerns, what we want to discuss... we want to open and use all

non-capitalist institution, completely free from private interests and market forces. Indeed, they could have quoted Resistanbul's (the leftist activist group that protested against their association with neoliberal corporations) own statement; 'we have to stop pretending that art is a free, space, autonomous from webs of capital and power' right back at them; the crux is not whether the institution is complicit with neoliberal mechanisms but how the curators chose to position themselves and the exhibition in relation to this fact.¹¹⁵

A further problem with the application of Mouffe's concept of agonistic public space to institutional exhibition-making, lies in her assumption that the art institution is truly democratic and open to the public. *Utopia Station*, with its private meetings, network economy and clique mentality was, for example, not nearly as open or democratic as it was presented. In fact, even the poster project, which disingenuously mimicked the 'open call' poster projects of grassroots activists, was restricted to those artists deemed worthy of envisioning a future 'utopia' by the organisers. Perhaps, most revealing, was the fact that the vast majority of the events and discussions surrounding *Utopia Station* were confined to the few days around the private opening and the media events. As Herren describes, after the opening events, the spaces had a 'palpable emptiness', the bar was unstaffed, and the, apparently functional artworks not being labelled, or no longer working, further confused, already bemused visitors.¹¹⁶ Critic Scott Rothkopf shared this unease of the location of such a rhetorically counter-neoliberal and 'democratic' exercise, in the Venice Biennale. He observed:

What could have been more 'fatally separate' than a cloistered space at the end of a kilometer-long Venetian Arsenale, accessible only to the most devoted pilgrims? There art's incorporation into "another economy" was apparently

possible channels'. See: Gail Day, Steve Edwards and David Mabb, 'What Keeps Mankind Alive?: The Eleventh International Istanbul Biennial. Once More on Aesthetics and Politics', *Historical Materialism* 18 (2010) p.153.

¹¹⁵ See: Direnistanbul, *Conceptual Framework of Direnal-Istanbul Resistance Days- What Keeps Us Not Alive?*, September 2009, Accessible online here: <http://resistanbul.wordpress.com/2009/09/04/conceptual-framework-of-direnal-istanbul-resistance-days-what-keeps-us-not-alive/> (accessed 10.03.2015).

¹¹⁶ Natilee Herren notes that after the opening days: "All that remains after the celebratory unveiling is a collection of garbage and unused objects...When the carnival ends, its objects become lifeless oddities, artificial significations of joyful activity, and unused tools for manufactured relations... Beyond this first architectural arrangement, the eye followed a maze of small plywood cubicles, each enclosing a miniature exhibition, and commissioned posters were sporadically fly-posted along the walls. None of these spaces or works were clearly labelled. Outdoors, there was an unmanned GUARANÁ POWER kiosk offering (at the time of my visit) nothing—its inventory had become the garbage strewn across the lawn. Atelier van Lieshout had made an environmentally friendly toilet that no longer worked. The performance and discussion program had taken place during the first three days of *Utopia Station*'s run, and so for visitors unable to attend opening weekend, it seemed that the party had already left and followed the curators to their next station (an exhibition of the commissioned posters in Munich that opened before *Utopia Station* closed). *Utopia Station*'s schedule of events created a predetermined fullness, which reinforced a palpable emptiness when the space went unused" See: Natilee, Herren, 'Utopia Station: Manufacturing the Multitude, *PART: Journal of the CUNY PhD Program in Art History*, No.12, CUNY, New York. Available online at: <http://part-archive.finitude.org/part12/articles/harren.html> (accessed 08.02.15).

evidenced... by the visitor's choice between an artist-imported, eco-friendly cola and an aqua frizzante from the snack bar.¹¹⁷

This limiting of discourse around 'Utopia', to events restricted to 'art world', diplomatic and corporate elites, challenged its legitimacy as a 'democratic public discourse': it rendered the Station a closed dialogue, rather than a truly public forum.

Theorists of Museology, and sociologists, concur that there is a manifest class bias and a white, male, euro-centric position within the discourse of these institutions. When the curators of projects such as 'Utopia Station' envisage the creation of a 'democratic space', they often fail to recognise that, in locating the debate in art world spaces, they are effectively excluding certain groups from the discussion. Indeed, the Venice edition of *Utopia Station* demonstrated that the particular danger, of embedding the grassroots 'gathering' approach, into the institutional art world, is that only certain people tend to get invited to participate.¹¹⁸ Even the edition located at the WSF tended to neglect the local audience in favour of its own 'civil society' demographic comprised of mainly 'white, middle-class, Europeans'.¹¹⁹ Though Liam Gillick claimed that the true moment of democratic politics was materialised in the discussions and gatherings on the 'road to Porto Alegre', he admits the project was defined and structured around loose connections and networks within the art world elite, where permission to enter into the dialogue depended on being somehow 'connected to' the central figures of the project.¹²⁰ Hence, these meetings could not be considered to be an open, democratic or representative discourse, any more than the opening events at Venice. Rather, they operated as a closed discussion where entry is reserved for those who have achieved a position in the network economy of the academic or art worlds.

It is important to recognise that although major art institutions may have significantly altered their practices— particularly in relation to education — widening participation and audience development, they still remain an important means of social distinction, through which the dominant social class dictate what constitutes good taste. The sedimented practices of art institutions serve the neoliberal class project by

¹¹⁷ Scott Rothkopf, 'In the Bag' in *Art Forum*, September 2003. pp.174-177

¹¹⁸ She stresses that the kind of social relations produced by the project failed to sustain antagonism as they did not include people from 'diverse economic backgrounds' in the way that more successful projects such as those produced by Thomas Hirschhorn and Santiago Sierra have done. See: Claire Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October*, Vol. 110, Autumn 2004, pp. 65-67 and Claire Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October*, Vol. 110, Autumn 2004, p. 70.

¹¹⁹ Although, the WSF is rhetorically democratic and activist it has also been accused of exclusivity due to its euro-centric outlook and its emphasis on theory and academicism rather than concrete political solutions at the events.

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

assimilating people into the dominant values of the ruling capitalist class, and by reinforcing class distinctions in order to naturalise the unequal distribution of wealth in our society. Therefore, without challenging their sedimented practices, curators cannot realistically hope to have any meaningful impact, in terms of either constituting critical class-conscious subjects, or directly disrupting the neoliberal class project. With the exception of the 29th Sao Paulo Bienal, all the exhibitions analysed here, fundamentally neglected the issue of social class in attempting to democratise the exhibition space; failing to address those modes of practice, display and address, that reinforce class positions and further neoliberal ideology. Indeed, my analyses reinforced the wilful neglect of issues of social class, found in my examination of political art exhibitions since 1989. This is symptomatic of the influence of post-Marxist perspectives (including most notably Chantal Mouffe's) – that strategically de-emphasise class identifications in the name of pluralism – on curatorial practice.

There was a palpable tension, for example, when Bonami branded his highly individualistic 'Glomanticism' as a viable form of counter-neoliberal practice, which was intensified by his use of standard white cube installations. He described countering the growing 'irrelevance of the individual', in contemporary neoliberal society, by emphasising autonomous individual experience, spiritual interiority and the 'original thought' or genius of every individual.¹²¹ However, as Elena Fillopovic and Mary-Anne Staniszewski have argued, the unceasing repetition, of this mode of installation, covertly reinforces the idea of 'sovereignty of self' that is embedded in liberal, neoliberal and capitalist ideology, and helps to repress challenges to the status quo, through unified collective action.¹²² Bonami's aim of focussing on individualised experience would, thus, only serve to help constitute atomised individuals uninterested in forming the collective political movements needed to challenge the neoliberal hegemony. Furthermore, Bonami states that his mode of presentation is aimed at 'training the gaze' of the viewer, so that they can learn the 'correct' way of looking at art. This not only contradicts his idea of the 'dictatorship of the viewer', but also echoes

¹²¹ He states in the catalogue introduction, '*Dreams and Conflicts* is an attempt to make the viewer feel the ground underneath his feet again, by recreating individual experiences... the organisation aims to allow a more individual encounter, where the viewer will be invited to see the point of view of each artist and each curator'. See: 'I Have a Dream' in *Dreams and Conflict: The Dictatorship of the Viewer 50th. International Art Exhibition*, La Biennale di Venezia, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003 p.2

¹²² See: Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*. MIT Press, Cambridge, 1998, and Elena Filipovic, 'The Global White Cube', in Barbara Vanderlinden/ Elena Filipovic, eds., *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials in Post-Wall Europe*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 2005, pp. 63-84.

the rationale for the hegemonic formal-aesthetic modes of address that have been used by bourgeois liberal institutions to reinforce class positions since the first public galleries were opened. It is hard to understand how replicating extant modes of display, and focussing on individual viewing experiences, can be perceived as an effective form of resistance against neoliberalism.¹²³ For Scott Rothkopf, the ‘somewhat disingenuous characterisation of this approach as a viable form of political resistance’ was ‘indicative of an art world haunted by its impotent relationship to recent geopolitics, yet understandably anxious to frame art as a socially redemptive practice’.¹²⁴

WHW sought to at least open up the art institution to different class perspectives by including works by unrepresented artists. However, the education project and the educator’s tour at the 29th Sao Paulo Bienal (described in the catalogue as ‘a political action through art’), offered the only significant counter-hegemonic strategy, in terms of democratising the space; primarily because they were aimed at challenging the extreme class divisions of Sao Paulo.¹²⁵ The project engineered a change in the class make up of their audience, by bringing in students from different strata of Sao Paulo’s segregated society, and by providing this new audience with the critical tools and information needed to make sense of the art, on their own terms. One of the Assistant Curators – who came from outside Brazil and was shocked by the extreme inequality in Sao Paulo – helped me to understand how the curators attempted to position the bienal, in relation to the class system in Sao Paulo.¹²⁶ In Sao Paulo’s strictly segregated society, mixing between social classes is so rare, that, for her, the stand out achievement (by far) of this year’s Bienal was the education project, as it acted as a leveller, bringing students and pupils from different social classes together, in a public space, to discuss art and politics on equal terms. She felt that with this strategy, the

¹²³ Several critics also pointed to the increased visibility and levels of private sponsorship in the edition of the Biennale, such as the ‘Illy’ coffee lounges that occupied strategic positions throughout the space, as evidence of the disingenuousness of Bonami’s claims of resistance. However, I would argue that in this circumstance it is beyond the curator’s power to change the sponsorship of the Biennale and that this should instead be considered as an example of how the curatorial intentions as an antagonistic guest can be contradicted by the host institution and their choice of funding.

¹²⁴ See: Scott Rothkopf, ‘In the Bag’, *Art Forum*, September 2003.

¹²⁵ See: Moacir Dos Anjos and Agnaldo Farrias, *Catalogue of the 29th Bienal de Sao Paulo: There is Always a Cup of Sea to Sail in*, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2010, p.409.

¹²⁶ According to her the public schools have very poor reputations and everyone who can feasibly afford to goes to private school which creates a strict segregation between the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’. Within each social class there is also significant stratification, which results in public schools with very strict segregation. For example, there may be over twenty strata within the middle classes and each stratum would attend a separate public school with little if any mixing between pupils at each type of school. This reinforces a very impenetrable class divide with a strict hierarchy. This comments were spontaneous, and formed part of a general conversation about class in Sao Paulo between myself and the assistant curators of the exhibition. They were not part of a formal interview so I could not transcribe the conversation and I have therefore not named the participants or quoted directly.

curators recognised that the Bienal's true counter-hegemonic function should be to break down such extreme class segregations.

The educators' tours helped to ensure that the project was not delivered as a top-down hegemonic narrative. There were 300 educators working for the Bienal, mostly students from Universities and Colleges around Sao Paulo, who came from different class backgrounds. They were given a scholarship to train for a year, 4-5 hours every day.¹²⁷ Each Educator was allowed to determine their own way of delivering the tours. They were not given a script and were encouraged to be responsive and interact with the participants. These tours must, therefore, be considered to be a valid counter-hegemonic strategy, in that they allowed the educators to express their own perspectives directly, and in response to the visitor's specific interests or questions. It was estimated that 400,000 children visited the Bienal and discussed the works and the relationship between art and politics, in both the exhibition space and in their classrooms. As Assistant Curator, Paulo Miyada noted, 'it transformed the space into a place where people could chat and play and discuss – rather than quiet contemplation, like in other Brazilian museums'.¹²⁸ It helped the adult visitors to talk more freely and openly and to be less conservative in the way they interacted with the material.

Both the terreiros at the 29th Bienal and 'the void' and public agora' at the 28th edition, however, highlighted the problems of attempting to artificially create democratic public spaces for spontaneous agonistic debate, inside of art institutions. Although international critics hailed the idea of 'the void' as radical, it was criticised because few local people used the archive and library, or attended talks and conferences.¹²⁹ These talks were poorly advertised and were perceived as exclusionary events, to which only art world insiders were invited. This contradicted the curators' attempt to open up the discourse about the future of the Bienal to the general public. The supposedly 'democratised' space of the pavilion was also heavily regulated. The 'open' entrance to the 'public square' was monitored with airport style security, and even those who had one of Paul Ramirez Jonas' keys to the front door, were contractually obliged to obey

¹²⁷ There were three stages: first they visited arts institutions around Sao Paulo and got to know how they work and how education programmes are delivered, secondly they discussed the artists and the themes of the biennial, and finally they were provided with final information that even the press would not know and trained to deliver the tours. See Stela Barbieri's website for more details on the project and to download the education pack: <http://www.stelabarbieri.com.br/en/edu/curadoria.htm> (accessed 13.06.2012).

¹²⁸ Interview with Paulo Miyada, 3.12.2010.

¹²⁹ See: Royce W. Smith, 28th Sao Paulo Bienal: In Living Contact, *X-TRA*, Volume 11, No. 4, Summer 2009. Available online: <http://x-traonline.org/article/28th-sao-paulo-bienal-in-living-contact/> (accessed 28.04.2011)

very strict rules governing when they could enter the building and what they could do once they were inside.¹³⁰



Fig. 36. The 'I Am the Street (Eu Sou A Rua)' terreiro in situ at the 29th Sao Paulo Bienal, with barrier preventing people from entering and a sign with the official programme of events. Photo: Lynn Wray

Similarly, when there were no events scheduled, the terreiros at the 29th Bienal tended to lay empty and unused.¹³¹ There were, thus several, immediate barriers that prevented the public from interacting with, and utilising, these spaces in different ways. Firstly, each terreiros in the exhibition was actually designed with a specific function in mind, such as screening films. As such, the architecture of each space tended to signify what they should be used for, and render the idea of user-defined function impotent. There was also no signage that invited the visitor to determine its function. There were no tools or materials available to allow the visitor to alter the space, stage an event, create artworks or present anything. And finally, and most importantly, some of the terreiros were closed – with barriers in the entrances – when there was not an event taking place.

Even without these barriers, the fact that the spaces are housed within an art exhibition means that they could not replicate the kind of public interaction, sense of ownership and self-direction that exists in the actual terreiros. The atmosphere and behavioural norms of a lived, external space cannot be simply reified and transported into an internal, institutional space. Because social regulations are so entrenched in

¹³⁰ *ibid.*

¹³¹ The exception was the Terreiros designed by Ernesto Neto, *Remembrance and Oblivion* (Shown above) which was always well utilised, although wholly for its dictated function, as a place for relaxation and reflection.

gallery spaces, the visitor would need a much greater degree of direction and support to take ownership of such structures, and attempt to define their functions.¹³² The terreiros, in contrast to the hugely successful education project, thus exposed the inherent contradiction in attempting to democratise political discourse, by trying to recuperate outdoor, open, common spaces, and recreate them inside of the institutional boundaries.

2.5 The chain of equivalence

For Mouffe, curators must not think of the 'art institution' as a singular monolithic enemy. Rather they must focus on the specific ways that the particular institution, in which they operate, reinforces the neoliberal hegemony. This is their particular adversary to overcome. Selecting the right small battle to participate in is, thus, crucially important. However, what is essential, for all of these small battles to have any transformative impact in a broader geo-political sense, is that they be joined together with other counter-hegemonic struggles enacted by activists, trade unions, political parties, environmental campaigners, and feminists, through what Mouffe terms 'a chain of equivalence'. The curator's role accordingly becomes to facilitate the linking of critical artistic practices, and their own counter-hegemonic practice to other struggles. As Mouffe states:

For the 'war of position' to be successful, linkage with traditional forms of political intervention like parties and trade unions cannot be avoided. It would be a serious mistake to believe that artistic activism could, on its own, bring about the end of neo-liberal hegemony.¹³³

Here, Mouffe argues that, though these groups may have different and even sometimes conflicting demands, a curator could enable these competing interest groups to recognise the mutual benefits of linking together their demands to instigate a

¹³² The *I Am the Street (Eu Sou A Rua)* Terreiro provided a good example, of how the conflict between institutional and non-institutional space prevented the structures from functioning as autonomous spaces. This structure was designed by the Dutch architects UN Studio as a podium for debates on the contemporary city. The curators describes its purpose as follows: 'reserved for discursive practices, nuanced non-hierarchically into lectures, artists' actions, round tables, public interviews and readings... a place for public speech, of wide ranging conversation, open to the public, built by the audience, by artists and by guest speakers'. However, as indicated by the photo below outside of the curator's official programme the Terreiro was closed to the public by placing a barrier at the entry. Additionally, though the curators the identity of the street – 'I am the street' – the architecture, evoked the feel of an institutional space: finished, cold, clinical and official and institutional it did not by any means convey the sense that as a member of the public you could shape its form, programme or use, or for that matter even enter its space outside of predetermined times. The text on the column outside the terreiros reads, "the design... refers to the Moebius strip, a sinuous surface in which the inside is confused with the outside' and this is perhaps where the contradiction lies. This terreiros lies very firmly inside, inside of the institution, in the sense that its function is contained, planned from above and its entry and exit point is strictly controlled, just like the Bienal building itself.

¹³³ Chantal Mouffe, 'Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces', *Art and Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, Volume 1, Number 2, Summer 2007.

process of institutional change that can transform not just the art institution, but all the existing institutional spaces into viable sites for the creation of a new hegemony.

In contrast to what Mouffe proposes here, the curators of the exhibitions I analysed did not succeed in setting up a chain of equivalence with activist groups. In the case of *Dreams and Conflict* and the 28th and 29th Sao Paulo Bienal, there was no real attempt to actively create such links – beyond the provision of an apparently neutral space, which, as clear political positions were not asserted, did not allow people to see the potential of linking up their demands. The curators of *Utopia Station*, and, to a lesser extent, *What Keeps Mankind Alive?* did make a concerted attempt to link up their specific agendas with those of leftist activist groups, but were unsuccessful in their attempts.

After the perceived failure of Venice, the question of how the curatorial team could develop *Utopia Station*, so that it might better integrate with other structures that form part of contemporary leftist discourse, had become the principal subject of their ongoing discussions.¹³⁴ They ultimately decided that establishing themselves as part of a chain of equivalence, with social and activist movements, (in the way that Mouffe prescribes), was the best way of permeating the ‘boundary role of the institution’. They identified the, then upcoming, WSF at Porto Alegre, in 2005, as an opportune location to situate a future ‘station’. As Liam Gillick has described, the enthusiasm for aligning the project with the WSF, and, thus, more directly with progressive, democratic leftist politics, came primarily from Molly Nesbit, Liz Linden, Immanuel Wallerstein and the Raqs Media Collective, who had all attended the WSF, in Mumbai, in 2004.¹³⁵ They argued that the Forum, which included culture on the agenda for the first time, would represent an opportunity to develop alongside another ‘parallel formation’ that was attempting to realise an agonistic public space by articulating diverse, leftist social movements, without aiming to unify their positions under one ideology or vision.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ See: Liam Gillick, ‘For a... functional utopia? A review of a position’ in Paul O'Neill (ed.), *Curating Subjects*, De Appel, Amsterdam, 2007 p.133

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁶ The curator described their participation as follows: ‘In many ways the dynamic of the World Social Forum provides Utopia Station with a parallel formation. It too is a way-station but much larger (150,000 people are expected); it too hosts a great variety of activities (at any moment there are 50 panels and activities to choose from); it too prizes talking and working together. But the relation of art to everything else has not been its primary concern. This year, for the first time, the WSF has put culture forward on the agenda and asked how culture’s work can express the diverse horizons of the movements, the contradictions and perspectives. Culture is being understood simply as part of a liberated social life. Its role is up for discussion. This is a discussion that those

It is easy to identify why the *Utopia Station* organisers envisioned that the WSF could become a 'natural ally', or 'co-conspirator', in their mission to develop an agonistic, democratic public forum. Just as *Utopia Station* was imagined as a counter-institution, positioned against the imperial and hegemonic presence of major art museums and biennials, the WSF was envisaged as a grassroots counter-institution to the World Economic Forum in Davos Switzerland.¹³⁷ It, similarly repudiated, both the need for a unified political position, or the formal status of an institution, and was intended to operate as a platform for the creation of a 'chain of equivalence' between different positions.¹³⁸ Consequently, the structural configuration of *Utopia Station* closely mirrored that of the WSF and its self-definition as an 'open meeting space' that has a charter that forbids participants from claiming shared political positions.¹³⁹ The WSF, with their slogan 'another world is possible', also ascribed the movement to 'Utopian' ideas, and had the same principle aim of opening up the idea that there is no alternative to neoliberal politics and free-market capitalism, by urging people to imagine what else could be.

The organisers clearly took the critique about the exclusivity of the Venice Biennale edition seriously, completely changing the structure and form of the *Station* for the WSF to concentrate on inclusive, mobile, site-specific, transitory and transmitted discourse, rather than on immediate, contained social relations. They hoped this approach would enable a wider, more differentiated audience to participate in the debate. As well as an apparent, but ambiguous, 'presence' in the Forum itself, it included the showcasing of six artist films (on local late night television), a radio show by Arto Lindsay, the re-presentation of the poster project on the city walls of Porto

involved with Utopia Station will join'. Quote taken from the E-Flux announcement, *Utopia Station at Porto Alegre*, January 26-31, 2005. Available online: <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/at-world-social-forum-in-porto-alegre/> (accessed 10.02.15)

¹³⁷ The Forum's charter it defines its purpose as follows: 'a plural, diversified, non-confessional, non-governmental and non-party context that, in a decentralized fashion, interrelates organizations and movements engaged in concrete action at levels from the local to the international to build another world. The World Social Forum charter is available online here: http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.php?id_menu=4&cd_language=2 (accessed 10.02.15).

¹³⁸ The WSF model of public space and its specific processes are argued to have been heavily indebted to Mouffe's theoretical framework of agonistic pluralism.

¹³⁹ The WSF's own Charter of Principles defines its democratic model as follows: 'The meetings of the World Social Forum do not deliberate on behalf of the World Social Forum as a body. No-one, therefore, will be authorized, on behalf of any of the editions of the Forum, to express positions claiming to be those of all its participants. The participants in the Forum shall not be called on to take decisions as a body, whether by vote or acclamation, on declarations or proposals for action that would commit all, or the majority, of them and that propose to be taken as establishing positions of the Forum as a body. It thus does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants in its meetings, nor does it intend to constitute the only option for interrelation and action by the organizations and movements that participate in it'. Available online here: http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.php?id_menu=4&cd_language=2 (accessed 10.02.15).

Alegre, and a bus used to 'improvise mobile programming, projections, screenings, performances, and presence on the grounds of the Forum and around the city'.¹⁴⁰

However, despite the admittedly valiant effort to create a more inclusive and democratic structure, it seems that they could not engage the wider public in Porto Alegre, or the specific Forum participants in a critical or antagonistic discourse. In this incarnation, they did not articulate any clearer political positions, or get any closer to creating the truly democratic open platform, necessary to enable an agonistic pluralism to develop. The comments of artists involved in the project signified that it failed to engage and connect with either of these two distinct audiences, in any meaningful way. Allan Sekula, for example, was utterly condemning of the whole venture, comparing it to 'unplanned research for a not-very-flattering novel about the follies of the art world'. This suggests that despite its intentions of breaking out of the confines of the institutional art world, it still, ultimately, failed to leave that world behind and connect with the citizens of Porto Alegre.¹⁴¹ Their focus on dispersal into the public realm, rather than the presentations and events held at the Forum itself, also, importantly, served to alienate the actual forum-goers and the activist participants – who they were intending to link with – from the art work and, thus, from the purpose of the project. According to T J Demos there was, in any event, little interest from Forum-goers in the artworks presented, as they rushed from panel to panel, suggesting that participants felt that the project was a little superficial and less immanent than other, more pragmatic, agendas such as the fight for the 'right to water', that were going on simultaneously.¹⁴² Even Immanuel Wallerstein, who had been heavily involved in the *Utopia Station* project, until that point, stated that he had felt obliged to dedicate his time, at the Forum, to the panel discussions rather than the art.¹⁴³

Indeed, many of the criticisms that have been levelled at the WSF, over the years, could also have been equally well targeted at both editions of the *Utopia Station* project. The WSF been criticised, since its conception, for promoting endless discussion without a clear mandate; for de-ideologising leftist politics, and for operating under the slogan 'another world is possible', but failing to articulate or offer any consistent vision of

¹⁴⁰ The films were produced by artists such as Allan Sekula, Matthew Barney, Jonas Mekas and Lygia Pape. For a fuller description of the works see: Pamela Lee, 'The Revolution May Be Televised', *Artforum*, April 2006 p.112.

¹⁴¹ See: T.J. Demos, 'Is Another World Possible? The Politics of Utopia in Recent Exhibition Practice' in Gavin Grindon (ed), *Art Production and Social Movements*, Autonomedia, New York, 2013, p.71 .

¹⁴² *ibid.*

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

what that other world might be, or what would be required to form it. Perhaps, then, the model of public space *Utopia Station* operated was just too similar to the WSF itself and, thus, this context served to simply reproduce and exaggerate the problems already inherent in the project. Anton Vidokle, in reflecting on the project, also reinforced one of the central criticisms levelled at the WSF over the years; that it is simply not possible to hear every voice. He observed that, just like the individual poster contributions, the whole *Utopia Station* project was simply too diffused and too ambiguous to stand out amongst the din and, instead, just became lost in the crowd of competing voices and carnival like atmosphere.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, more pluralism, injected into an already pluralistic discourse, just added to a chaotic din – whereas a clear articulation of how art could contribute to and help connect the various struggles by, for example, helping others to imagine ‘another world’, might have been more effective. Although the organisers made a bold effort, it still did not instigate the formation of the chain of equivalence that they sought.

WHW’s decision to work with an institution that has specific and historical ties to furthering neoliberal interests compromised their ability to form a chain of equivalence, with local activist groups. It drew fervent criticism from sections of the Turkish left, who were concerned that the project encouraged the institutionalisation of dissent, and was not sufficiently engaged in the existing leftist struggle – therefore deeming it not politically active enough, within the specific context of Istanbul. Resistanbul argued that the specific format of the Biennial would interiorise political dialogue rather than open it up to a whole public; inviting them to, instead, venture out of the institution to engage in the real political battles – ‘to resist in the streets not in corporate spaces reserved for tolerated institutional critique so as to help them clear their conscience’.¹⁴⁵ For Resistanbul, WHW’s failure to engage in local political resistance movements was symbolic of a wider problem of Biennials – that they often engender a corporatised understanding of public space, which entirely contradicts Mouffe’s vision of agonistic politics – becoming mere ‘hospitality’ zones for corporate and art world elites as they negotiate the global economy. They were particularly concerned that WHW, despite their expressed anti-neoliberal position, were not doing

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ See: Direnistanbul, *Conceptual Framework of Direnal-Istanbul Resistance Days- What Keeps Us Not Alive?*, September 2009, Accessible online here: <http://resistanbul.wordpress.com/2009/09/04/conceptual-framework-of-direnal-istanbul-resistance-days-what-keeps-us-not-alive/> (accessed 10.03.2015).

anything to resist, or even acknowledge, the visit of the IMF and the World Bank to Istanbul, whilst the Biennial was on.¹⁴⁶

The photographs originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJM Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The photograph were sourced from: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1218519/Turkish-police-tear-gas-hundreds-IMF-protest.html>

The photographs originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJM Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions.

Fig. 37. Confrontation between police and activist groups including Direnistanbul at the anti-capitalist protests during the IMF's visit in October 2009. Fig. 38. Resistanbul's performance at the Antrepo on the opening night of the Biennial. Fig. 39. Their graffiti on one of the official biennial posters reading Capitalism Kills.

As Harutyunyan et al. point out; WHW's conspicuous refusal to engage in the protests around the IMF's visit seemed to undermine their counter-neoliberal position.¹⁴⁷ The

¹⁴⁶ They issued a manifesto which offered an alternative avenue of leftist art production and display that they felt could better link up with activist demands: We declared that we are not hospitable... Evacuate corporate spaces, liberate your works. Let's prepare works and visuals (poster, sticker, stencil etc.) for the streets of the resistance days. Let's produce together, not within the white cube, but in the streets and squares during the resistance week! Creativity belongs to each and every of us and can't be sponsored'. *ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Harutyunyan et al. contextualise WHW's inability to bridge the distance between the spaces of art and activism in relation to the changing nature of the class struggle and Hardt and Negri's theory. They argue that in the post-Fordist era the distance between the working class and artists/intellectuals has been closed with the emergence of the new subject – the precariat. Hence, the working class in Istanbul did not need an institutional elite (curator-leaders) to follow nor people to protest for them, within the precariat subject the artistic avant-garde and the political avant-garde have already folded into one, and the protestors were rebelling as part of *the* new working class against their exploiters rather than on behalf of them. The art world may constitute a critical public sphere but it is still a fatally distant and separate space, which simply does not represent the less 'shiny' aspects and citizens of the city and cannot ever accommodate the truly revolutionary, and often violent, confrontations that are necessary to effect genuine structural change. I would thus argue that the antagonism between the direct-action groups and WHW is actually centred on different positions on how to critically engage with institutions. Angela Harutyunyan, Aras Özgün, Eric Goodfield, 'Event and Counter-Event: The Political Economy of the Istanbul Biennial and Its Excesses', *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol. 23, Issue 4, 2011 p.494.

visit should have provided the perfect occasion to create a 'chain of equivalence' between their own position, the counter-capitalist positions of the artists they were showing, and the other anti-neoliberal leftist voices in Turkey. Instead, their presence at the event was reduced to a compelling image that circulated in the news media, and compounded the disconnect between art and politics by showing 'tear gas and smoke obscuring the banners of the 11th Biennial, hanging around the square – and Turkish riot police charging the demonstrators underneath them'.¹⁴⁸

2.6 Conclusion

My analysis of these five exhibitions suggests that, though many of the above issues have arisen due to the curator's specific interpretation of Mouffe's ideas, there are also some inherent problems with Mouffe's overall advocacy of counter-hegemonic curating from within established institutional frameworks. The case studies all differently highlighted that there are, in particular, clear limitations and contradictions in the idea that an independent curator can act as an 'antagonistic guest', and mount a counter-hegemonic challenge against neoliberalism, from within a host institution. They showed that the curators sometimes did not possess the power necessary to disarticulate the current hegemonic ways of doing things, in such established institutions, as the overriding political rationality of the institution delimited what it was possible for a curator to articulate and to achieve, politically.

In some instances, this has meant that the institutional will has directly imposed itself on the curatorial team and, either limited, or actively censored what they were able to achieve. In other cases, the institution's desire to retain their essential state and supplementary corporate funding has hampered both guest curators' and exhibited artists' efforts to take a political position and to materialise their political values in their work. The censorship of Robert Jacoby's work, at the 29th Sao Paulo Bienal, highlighted just how limited the ability, and desire, of most state-funded art institutions to engage in active political discourse really is, by demonstrating that it is rarely possible to clearly define your political position, or engage in the politics of the 'here and now', inside the space of such organisations.

¹⁴⁸ Angela Harutyunyan, Aras Özgün, Eric Goodfield, 'Event and Counter-Event: The Political Economy of the Istanbul Biennial and Its Excesses', *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol. 23, Issue 4, 2011 p.494.

This suggests that Mouffe does not adequately recognise how significantly institutional policies and objectives (which are always, at least partially, driven by centralised agendas and, thus, defined by the need to guarantee funding and meet footfall targets) may delimit or contradict the counter-hegemonic agendas of guest curators. These curators, though they may have the critical distance to take a fresh perspective on the institutions practice, rarely have the power, or the mandate necessary, to bring about any long-term, meaningful change, within the institution. This is not to say that they cannot bring about transformations, but rather to reinforce that they cannot force this to happen, and that such changes will always be a negotiation and, ultimately, the choice of the power brokers heading up the institution (whose position is inherently compromised by the need to protect that institution). Moreover, Mouffe – in her claim that the existing art institutions can be reconfigured as ‘sanctuaries from commercial interests’ – fails to recognise how far public art institutions are entangled with neoliberal mechanisms and capitalist markets. Her concept of them becoming crucial public spaces for the development of an agonistic and democratic radical political discourse, similarly fails to take account of just how elitist public art institutions are still perceived as being, and the role that they still play in reinforcing class positions.

The analyses also suggest that the linguistic framing of exhibitions (that Mouffe’s theoretical framework encourages) has also resulted in a tendency for curators to negate the spatial and visual properties of the exhibition medium. In exhibitions that focus on the construction of agonistic public space, in particular, the visual and spatial elements often giving way to a pure discursivity, which, ironically, almost always fails to articulate a clear alternative position or future imaginary. This is revealing of one of the central problems in Mouffe’s specific theory of discourse – articulation theory.

Although intended as an anti-essentialist alternative to Marxism, it could be accused of reducing everything to discourse. Such approaches contradict Mouffe’s own emphasis on both the importance of clear and direct ‘articulation’ of political positions, and the exploitation of the ‘affective’ dimension of politics, for mobilising the people’s political passions. Although it is important for a curator to fully understand that the exhibition is a much more limited medium than a literary text, it is also important to recognise that many of those aspects of exhibitions (that set them apart from such texts) can also be used positively, as part of a counter-hegemonic project.

Although, it might be tempting to conclude, from my analysis of the exhibitions presented here, that Mouffe's proposition of counter-hegemonic curating from within is an ineffective approach to mounting a challenge against neoliberalism, she does emphasise just how crucial it is that the guest curator understands the structural power relations within the specific institution in which they are going to intervene. It, therefore, becomes the curator's responsibility to ensure that they have a complete understanding of the political and social history of the institution – and the ways in which their programme of work is enmeshed with neoliberal ideology – before attempting to enact any counter-hegemonic strategies. But is this ever really possible? Will a guest curator ever really be privy to the precise motivations and internal politics of the institution in which they are temporarily working?

The curators in the exhibitions that I have analysed – in their focus on decentring curatorial authorship and disarticulating the exhibition form – have generally failed to identify those hegemonic forces in 'mega-exhibitions' that are most complicit in furthering neo-liberal hegemony and, thus, most urgently require disarticulating: the standardised modes of display, the idea of a correct individual and disinterested way of looking at art, the suppression of alternative voices, the reinforcement of social conventions and the complicity with market capitalism through private philanthropy and sponsorship. However, there were some critical moments of success that demonstrate that, if the battle is chosen wisely, curators can make some progress, in terms of pushing the boundaries of who has permission to speak and be heard, and what can be said in major art institutions. Although this may seem very insignificant, in terms of the overriding objective of challenging the neoliberal hegemony, if we accept that the major art institutions play an important role in maintaining this dominance, we must also accept that even small shifts that open up the concentrated power of these institutions could constitute a form of progress.

Conducting this evaluation has enabled me to consider how to develop a more self-aware, critical and *affective* counter-hegemonic strategy for the exhibition at Tate Liverpool; one that utilises the spatial and visual dimensions of the exhibition medium, speaks from a clear authorial position, and attempts to reconfigure, or rearticulate, those standard practices and modes of address that reinforce class positions. This strategy will be set out in the following section and is influenced primarily by the only

exhibition I examined that did not involve a complete disarticulation of the exhibition narrative – WHW's 11th Istanbul Biennial – but also by the unique education initiatives of the 29th Sao Paulo Bienal.

I believe that WHW's curatorial approach was the most effective of all of the case studies (in terms of Mouffe's criteria), and points the best way forward in terms of my exhibition at Tate Liverpool. This is due to the fact that they focussed on the crucial moment of rearticulation, and worked within the parameters of the medium (and their specific institutional context) to expand the boundaries of that medium, forever. What is even more unique is that they actually articulated a clear alternative in a reinvented Communism. Although the exhibition does not come close to providing any definitive answers, as to how their future Communist society might be realised, it, at least, provided a clear position that the visitor could think about; enabling them to, then, consider their own position in relation to, and react to. Indeed, this is the only exhibition based at a major art institution that has ever been curated from an explicit leftist position.

As Henrietta Lidichi has pointed out, all curators and, indeed, all creative producers, are holders of symbolic power.¹⁴⁹ It is clear to me that the leftist curator, rather than trying to disingenuously naturalise or neutralise their own privileged position, should harness this power and use it as a means of influence. Quite simply, if you want to make change happen, then you should use the tools, and the means of influence that you have at your disposal, to 'make change happen'. It is, thus, WHW's strategy of asserting their curatorial authorship and opinions (as opinion rather than fact), and asking probing questions, that I will take forward in my exhibition proposal for Tate Liverpool. They could, however, have linked up better with existing active political movements, in order to provide a more relevant local discussion, and to bring different sectors of the left together, around the shared values of 'social equality, solidarity and social justice', that they evoke in their introductory statement. This is a lesson I also took into consideration when developing my exhibition concept.

¹⁴⁹ Henrietta Lidichi, 'The Politics and the Poetics of Exhibiting Other Culture' in Stuart Hall (ed.) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Sage Publications, London, 1997, p.180.

3. Defining a Counter-Hegemonic Approach: Rearticulating the Retrospective Survey Exhibition as Post-Political Critique

In 2010, I proposed an exhibition to Tate Liverpool entitled *What's Left?: Putting Values into Practice*. This exhibition offered an examination of how artists had put their ethico-political values into practice, in terms of making, displaying and disseminating their work. This concept was developed in response to Tate's wish to curate an exhibition with global reach and broad historic span, which explored the relationship between art and politics. I aimed to use this opportunity to define, and test out, a new model of counter-hegemonic exhibition-making that combined a post-Marxist approach to critiquing the post-political condition, with a neo-Marxist understanding of the centrality of class positions to the neoliberal project. This chapter sets out the rationale for the exhibition concept, and the organising principle, installation and interpretation strategies that I formulated in an attempt to rearticulate the retrospective survey exhibition, as a form of post-political critique.

In defining a counter-hegemonic strategy, it was important to, firstly, identify which specific aspects of neoliberal ideology and governance I opposed, and to pinpoint which of these it would be realistically possible to target, through this exhibition project, at this specific institution. It has been well established that the most socially damaging impact of neoliberal policies has been increasing income inequality. Since 1989, there has been a vastly unequal concentration of power and wealth in the hands of an increasingly small capitalist class, at the expense of other citizens.¹ As David Harvey argues, inequality is not just a symptom of neoliberal politics; it is the essential underlying ideology – the *raison d'être* – underpinning every aspect of its administration.² The increasing inequality is, for Harvey, evidence that the fundamental aim of the neoliberal project is not greater wealth for all but, rather, the restoration of class power.

¹ Comprehensive statistical research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has shown the correlation between neoliberal policies and increasing income inequality between 1985 and 2015. In most countries the gap between rich and poor is at the highest level for 30 years. In the 1980s the inequality ratio stood at 7:1 whilst in 2015 it reached 9.6:1. Their research has also demonstrated the correlation between rising income inequality and worsening quality of life during this period. OECD (2015), Income inequality (indicator). <https://data.oecd.org/inequality/income-inequality.htm#indicator-chart> (Accessed on 21.12.2015) and OECD, *In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2015.

² See: David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, p.3.

Income inequality is, unfortunately, not something that can be directly changed through the production of an art exhibition – it requires significant structural change. However, as I shall go on to argue, the majority of exhibitions at public art institutions do serve to reinforce the class distinctions that are so crucial to naturalising the increasing inequality of the neoliberal project. Therefore, though they do not directly increase inequality, they represent one mechanism through which inequality becomes culturally accepted. Moreover, the installation and interpretation strategies employed in institutional art exhibitions, consistently reproduce a social experience, that inculcates the liberal ideal of the autonomous, free individual. They also foster the idea that professional artists should be the only people entitled to non-alienated production. These two tendencies can be argued to indirectly limit collective action against inequality, by devaluing people's creative and intellectual agency, and suppressing peoples' ability to collectively organise. I, therefore, proposed a model of counter-hegemonic exhibition-making that specifically targeted these specific hegemonic institutional practices.

Though I initially aimed to use Chantal Mouffe's theory to inform the development of my whole counter-hegemonic approach, her post-Marxist theory could not, on its own, offer a viable framework for a curatorial strategy that could effectively counter the neoliberal class project. Her strategic move away from class-based identity politics has resulted in theoretical frameworks that do not take account of the role that art institutions play in reinforcing class hierarchies. Instead, I adopted Harvey's analysis of neoliberalism to argue that, in defining a counter-hegemonic installation and interpretation strategy, it is essential to bring class politics to the fore.

Where Mouffe is more helpful is in offering a theoretical framework for post-political critique. Rather than focussing on countering the detrimental social impact of neoliberal policies, Mouffe addresses the specific ideological mechanisms through which neoliberal ideologues maintain their power. She argues that these ideologues have successfully embedded a post-political concept of politics in the public consciousness – a politics without antagonism, passion, emotions or values – and, thus, strategically constituted a public that are incapable of envisaging 'the problems facing

our societies in a political way'.³ The emphasis on technocratic, 'pragmatic' rationalism and consensus politics has, in her view, alienated people from their political values and undermined their role in political change.

Mouffe makes a persuasive point when she asserts that there cannot be an effective challenge to the neoliberal hegemony without breaking down the perception that there is no alternative to neoliberal politics. However, as I argued in Chapter Two, her specific framework for achieving this is also problematic. Her advocacy of the art museum as the locus for an agonistic form of radical democracy — where people could come together and debate political issues — overestimates how 'public', how 'democratic' and how able such spaces are to accommodate antagonistic positions. My proposal was to therefore, instead, re-imagine the retrospective survey exhibition as a form of post-political critique, where the concept, organising principle, installation and interpretation strategies were all directed toward changing people's perception of what politics is, and could be.

The collaborative research with Tate also provided an opportunity to test out the idea that a guest curator could operate as an 'antagonistic guest', and effectively enact counter-hegemonic strategies from within the institutional frame.⁴ As a postgraduate research student with limited curatorial expertise, I had less status than previous guest curators and no power or remit to directly change institutional practices. However, Professor of Spatial Practice, Marcus Meissen has elucidated how this relative inexperience can be advantageous in terms of counter-hegemonic critique from within. His model of 'conflictual participation' provided a framework that enabled me to recognise the potential value of my position and its compatibility with Chantal Mouffe's concept of agonistic practice.

Meissen quotes Mouffe's theory to advocate, like her, for a form of counter-hegemonic critique from within institutional frames. He suggests that only an understanding of 'collaboration' that runs closer to the pejorative sense assumed in political circles, to

³ See: Chantal Mouffe, 'Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices?' in Dr Shep Steiner and Trevor Joyce (Eds.) *Cork Caucus: On Art, Possibility and Democracy*, Revolver, 2005 p.153

⁴ As an, admittedly fairly inactive, socialist, opposed to neoliberal ideology and consensus politics, it also provided an opportunity to attempt to put into practice my own political values through the way I curate the exhibition and to thus also examine the tensions, limitations and difficulties that emerge in trying to do this from within a major, public art museum.

denote working with an enemy or an occupying force, could bring about meaningful transformations to hegemonic institutional practices.⁵ However, unlike Mouffe he has argued that for a counter-hegemonic strategy to work, collaboration ‘needs to be based on a critical voice from outside the circle of vested interests’ – not someone who is already part of the art world.⁶ Meissen asserts that even the freelance professional curator would be too immersed in the existing discourses and practices of the institutional art world to effect institutional change. He states that:

Instead of nurturing the next generation of facilitators and mediators, we should invite the interventions of the ‘disinterested outsider’, the person who is unaware of prerequisites and existing protocols and who enters the arena with nothing but creative intellect. Running down the corridor with no fear of causing friction or destabilising existing power-relations, he or she is opening up a space for change, one that enables ‘political politics’.⁷

This perspective enable me to envisage my relative curatorial ‘innocence’ as a counter-hegemonic asset: as something that could be used proactively to both question the sedimented exhibition-making practices at Tate Liverpool, and to challenge the post-political notion that only established experts can legitimately practice politics.⁸

3.1 Defining the exhibition concept: *What’s Left?*

Before I defined the subject, I had to consider what a survey exhibition could usefully contribute to the ‘public understanding of art’ that forms Tate’s core mission. The retrospective survey show is a distinct type of exhibition, which attempts to bring together a broad body of material under one banner. This may be focussed on one movement at a particular time, in a particular place — such as *Live in Your Head*:

⁵ Here collaboration is understood in the political sense of, ‘willingly assisting an enemy of one’s country and especially an occupying force or a malevolent power: to work together with an agency or instrumentality with which one is not immediately connected’. Meissen quotes Florian Schneider definition offered in Florian Schneider, ‘Cooperation: The Dark Site of the Multitude’, Theory Kit 1.2, February 6–10, 2006. Available online at <http://kit.kein.org/node/1> (accessed 03.04.15).

⁶ He uses Rem Koolhaas and Hans Ulrich Obrist’s 24-Hour Interview Marathon at the Serpentine Gallery, London, as an example of how events situated in art world institutions tend to be unrepresentative and thus lack the conflict or antagonism necessary to instigate productive change. He states: ‘Surely, one would think, if one sets out to trace some kind of cross-section, one would include a multitude of dissimilar voices... I am not trying to argue for a more inclusive model or one based on political correctness. On the contrary: what was missing was precisely the conflict that “is” the city. The Marathon was set up as a “stimulating set of discussions.” Yet all participants were either part of an existing network of cultural practitioners, thinkers, or commentators or at least originated from the same cultural milieu. In order to do justice to the complexity of the city, one also needs to include the conflicting forces of that city’. See: Markus Meissen, ‘The Violence of Participation: Spatial Practices Beyond Models of Consensus’ in *Fillip* 7, Winter 2008. Available online at: <http://fillip.ca/content/the-violence-of-participation> (accessed 03.04.15).

⁷ Markus Meissen, ‘The Violence of Participation: Spatial Practices beyond Models of Consensus’ in *Fillip* 7, winter 2008. Available online at: <http://fillip.ca/content/the-violence-of-participation> (accessed 03.04.15).

⁸ For an account of a similar approach, based around exploring a subject from a shared position of ‘not-knowing’ see: Bernd Kraeftner, Judith Kroell and Isabel Warner (Xperiment!), ‘Walking on a Storyboard, Performing Shared Incompetence: Exhibiting “Science” in the Public Realm’, in Paul Basu and Sharon Macdonald (eds.) *Exhibition Experiments*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2007, pp.109-131.

Concept and Experiment in Britain, 1965-1975 (Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 2000) — or it could be as broad as *On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century* (MoMA, New York, 2010-11).⁹ Both shows contributed to the wider public understanding of art by providing a broad base of information for the non-expert. As the primary sites for the presentation of new art historical propositions, they also actively produce new knowledge and construct histories. They are, thus, political, in that they can either reinforce established views or be used to assert the relevance of a new idea, or a marginalised narrative, into the mainstream story of art — gradually shifting the official orthodoxy.¹⁰ Moreover, they can also provide an opportunity to critically re-examine existing themes. As Terry Smith points out, *On Line* was significant because women artists featured predominately, and the show shifted the public perspective of female artists by establishing drawing as a valid and important medium.¹¹

Retrospective survey exhibitions, on the other hand, are often criticised for being superficial, or insufficiently rigorous. Yet, no matter how partial and reductionist such exhibitions inevitably are, they are also an essential step in the process of introducing marginalised voices or ideas into the mainstream. So, for example, *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent* (Hayward Gallery, London, 2005) was rightly criticised for its reduction of a continent's art practice into a single exhibition — but it did make a positive contribution by helping to legitimise the work of certain African artists, which enabled their inclusion in other, more nuanced, exhibitions.¹² When major public art museums, such as MoMA, Tate, Reina Sofia and the Pompidou, host retrospective survey shows, it is particularly important, as it signals the acceptance of art forms, artists, ideas, media, and geographic regions, into the dominant art historical narrative. Thus, although the survey exhibition is difficult to reconcile with the specific demands of a PhD research project, I recognised it as trope that could be used to push forward a different concept of politics in the institutional mainstream. It was subsequently

⁹ Daniel Palmer devotes a case study to *Live in Your Head* in his doctoral thesis. See: Daniel Palmer, *Exhibiting practice: retrospective survey exhibitions of conceptual art, 1989-2000*. (PhD thesis), Kingston University, 2007. For a review of *On Line* see: Eva Meltzer, 'On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century (Review)', *Frieze*, Issue 141, September 2011. Available online at: <http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/on-line-drawing-through-the-twentieth-century/> (accessed 13.06.2015).

¹⁰ So, for example, *On Line* asserted that drawing became an important medium in its own right in the twentieth century. It is clear from even the most cursory examination of exhibitions at modern art museums that drawing still does not enjoy an equal status or prominence with either painting or sculpture.

¹¹ Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*, Independent Curators International, New York, 2012 pp. 149-150.

¹² Although this is undoubtedly a salient point, one has to question what the thresholds of this critique are. If a continent is not okay, then what about one particular country? Is it permissible to mount exhibition of Chinese art for example, when this particular country is more populous than our own continent?

important to identify the themes missing from the story of political art in art museums, and to formulate an original concept that could counter the dominant articulation of politics, in such exhibitions.

Chapter One argued that since 1989, institutional exhibitions have reinforced the post-political landscape by de-ideologising politics, and by excluding the idea of left and right politics from official representations of culture. Previous exhibitions, addressing political themes, have completely avoided the terms 'left' and 'right' and have tended to articulate a 'pragmatic', individualist and ideology-free vision of politics that serves to reinforce the idea that there is 'no alternative' to neoliberal consensus politics. My contention was that the significant influence that leftist politics has exerted over modern and contemporary art production had also been conspicuously absented from exhibitions at mainstream institutions. Moreover, museums had failed to understand that artists could put their politics into practice in the way they produce, display and disseminate their work. My proposal to Tate Liverpool was, therefore for an exhibition that explicitly examined how left-wing ethico-political values had differently impacted on the way that artists make and do their work. This concept was intended as a means of countering the marginalisation of the history of leftist art production, and thus re-ideologising the story of art told in mainstream public institutional contexts. It served as a counter-hegemonic intervention, in the disenfranchising post-political consensus-orientated landscape, by strategically embracing the adversarial model of 'left and right' and defining politics through conflicting ethico-political values.

My proposal aligned with Mouffe's vision of the institutional exhibition as an agonistic space, where conflicting political values could come up into contact with each other. Unlike the vast majority of exhibition analysed in Chapters One and Two, it also embraced her position that the institution of such a space, and the reignition of peoples' interest in politics, necessitates the revivification of 'the idea of the Left and the distinction between Left and Right'.¹³ Mouffe argues that the left/right model of adversarial politics provides the framework that enables people to think politically. Without it, she argues that politics can be only technocratic, or played out in the moral

¹³ Chantal Mouffe, 'Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices?' in Dr Shep Steiner and Trevor Joyce (Eds.) *Cork Caucus: On Art, Possibility and Democracy*, Revolver, 2005 p.164.

register. Reducing politics to technocratic procedures obviates the need for properly political questions and, thus, distances citizens from the political process. When politics becomes a question of morality, on the other hand, and we are encouraged to choose between 'good' and 'bad' rather than 'left' and 'right', it tends to encourage people to perceive those that hold different views as enemies that must be eliminated, rather than adversaries who can be defeated through a democratic process.¹⁴ Mouffe argues that to offer a compelling alternative to neoliberal consensus politics on the one hand, and divisive nationalism or religious fundamentalism on the other, the democratic left have to more emphatically define their values in political terms; using the 'left/right' distinction to differentiate their views on equality, redistribution, solidarity, and so on.

The focus on artists' ethico-political values was, therefore, intended to counter the post-political concept of politics as a technocratic consensus-orientated procedure administered by experts, and to assert that political values *are* the foundation of our democratic politics. In doing this, the exhibition could also play a part in the revival of a model capable of bringing together different social groups in the fight for greater income equality. Counter-hegemonic exhibitions organised around identity politics provide little scope for articulating together different struggles to challenge income inequality. By instead using the retrospective survey to revivify the left-right model of conflictual politics, in an important public cultural institution, I argued we could aid the construction of partisans and adversaries around common ethico-political values, rather than essentialist identities. The exhibition was also intended to communicate that ethico-political values can be put into practice in our everyday lives and actions. By focusing on how artists make and do their work, rather than their content and subject matter, it offered art making as a quotidian example of thinking politically, and being political.

¹⁴ A morality driven politics is used by neoliberal ideologues to both conflate all forms of alternative leftist politics with the atrocities of previous 'Communist' regimes and to condemn the more extreme right-wing populists as 'evil'. This is intended to secure their own identity as 'good' democrats, in spite of the inequalities, fractious social relations and poor living conditions their policies tend to exacerbate. The moral model is, however, a dangerous tactic as more extreme right-wing populists are increasingly able to ignite passions by constructing a 'them' and us' distinction on the grounds of essentialist identities (religion, race and nationality). As these forms of identification are absolute they turn the 'other' into an enemy that has to be eliminated rather than a political adversary who can be challenged as part of the democratic process. For example, by not addressing people's concerns about immigration on political terms (i.e. in relation to issues of inequality and poverty and the principles of freedom of movement and political asylum) politicians only further disenfranchise people who already feel marginalised, which increases the appeal of extreme right populist movements. The Conservatives played upon the rising nationalism in British society that has weakened the Labour movement with unprecedented success in the May 2015 General Election. By using the right-wing media to stoke up fear about the prospect of the SNP forming a coalition with Labour that would diminish the 'English Voice' in parliament they not only encouraged traditional Labour voters in the North of England to vote UKIP but also forced Labour to declare that they would not form a coalition with the SNP which further alienated Scottish voters.

In June 2010, I gave the exhibition the working title, *What's Left?* This choice was intended to counter the tendency of curators (of political art exhibitions) to avoid polemical terms or direct references to specific ideologies. Institutions often prefer terms like 'revolution', 'radical' 'social change', 'utopia' and 'progress', or quotes by political thinkers and lines from poems that do not shake the curatorial 'neutrality'. This title also acknowledged that there is no fixed definition of what 'left' means, and that there are many different and distinct leftist ideologies. I hoped to make clear that we were not seeking to offer a comprehensive history of leftist art, but rather to provide contrasting examples of how different artists and collectives had, themselves, interpreted different leftist ideologies, and sought to put them into practice. It was also intended to signify that we were involving ourselves in a contemporaneous political discourse; helping to redefine the political left, in relation to its past values.

Although it is important to acknowledge that my choice of subject was connected to my own broadly socialist political position, I did not feel that this position was well defined enough to speak from in the exhibition itself.¹⁵ After all, it would have been impossible to present a unified stance in the way that WHW did at the 11th Istanbul Biennial. I was working as part of a curatorial team that did not necessarily share the same political perspectives and objectives. Moreover, I would never have been permitted to do this by Tate Liverpool, who, as a national institution, are obliged to respond civically to all taxpayers and, thus, believe it necessary to articulate a non-partisan position in all aspects of its programming.

To be clear, I *did not* aim to construct the exhibition as left wing propaganda. However, the focus on a value-driven politics *was* intended to play a strategic role in a wider movement that argued that the different parties of the left needed to reaffirm their own political values, in order to better differentiate themselves from neoliberalism and centre-right positions.¹⁶ Hence, I shared Chantal Mouffe's broad perspective that there

¹⁵ To be explicit, like many others, I would describe my position as Socialist. I am currently a card-carrying member of the Labour Party, and the newly formed Left Unity party, but am not politically active in either of these movements. I sometimes attend meetings as part of the Compass Merseyside group.

¹⁶ It is only by making the case for a clearly different society that they believe the Left will be able to attract popular support whilst remaining true to its core principles. Since I defined my proposal, the election of Syriza in Greece, and the increasing strength of the Podemos movement in Spain (themselves influenced by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's theoretical frameworks) have affirmed this view.

is an urgent need to revivify the political left, in order to revitalise democracy as a whole. In this sense the exhibition was *political*, and I was arguing that we should *curate politically*.

My contention was that it is only by providing a genuine alternative to neoliberal, centrist, consensus politics, that we can give people more political agency and stimulate more engagement in the political process. I hoped that the focus on the left would act as a polemic device that would stir some ‘passion’ (to use Mouffe’s term) into the stale consensus politics articulated by institutional exhibitions, garner significant press attention, and trigger a wider debate about the future of the Left. Though I looked to provide some opportunities for collective debate within the exhibition space, I remained conscious of the failure of previous attempts to institute the gallery itself as an agonistic, democratic space for political debate. Instead, I envisioned the exhibition as a space that would contribute to the reinvigoration of the broader democratic project by providing a space in which the visitors could think about, and reflect upon, their own ethico-political values, and how they related to others. I hoped that by asserting the importance and the relevance of the left/right framework, in the context of a national cultural institution, this would trigger further debate in more viable, more democratic, and less compromised agonistic spaces.

3.2 Defining an organising principle and exhibition structure: ‘Epic Agonism’

The most challenging part of the process of conceptualising the exhibition was defining a coherent organising principle that could both communicate the exhibition concept and further the counter-hegemonic aims outlined above. Three significant challenges arose: first, to devise an inclusive but not encyclopaedic chronology; second, to balance interpretative and contextual information; and, finally, to reconcile a potential contradiction between the use of ‘affect’, and the provision of a critical distance. In meeting these challenges, I was informed by WHW’s use of Brechtian theatre at the 11th Istanbul Biennial. I explored how his method of distancing could be combined with Chantal Mouffe’s advocacy of agonistic and ‘affective’ practice to create an alternative counter-hegemonic framework.

The curator's main means of communicating their narrative, or of building an argument, is not through text or the artworks, but through the physical organisation of these artworks in the exhibition space.¹⁷ As Boris Groys explains, 'every exhibition tells a story, by directing the viewer through the exhibition in a particular order; the exhibition space is always a narrative space'.¹⁸ Through *What's Left?* we aimed to narrate how leftist political values had influenced the production and reception of much of the art now presented in public art museums. Its organising principle, therefore, had to be capable of de-familiarising the viewer from the conventional narratives presented in art museums, which marginalise how far these artists' attempts to put their leftist political values into practice, have influenced the production and reception of art.¹⁹ Brechtian strategies of distancing or defamiliarisation – his 'distancing' or 'alienation' effect – thus represented a crucial means of jarring the viewer from the passive consumption of, sometimes, familiar works, and opening up new ways of thinking about art.

All retrospective exhibitions are generally organised according to a thematic or a chronological arrangement. My review of exhibitions demonstrated that exhibitions of political art tend to be arranged chronologically because, in this model, the work can be situated clearly within a causal narrative that demonstrates the influence that artists have had on specific political events, and vice versa. Moreover, the chronological hang exploits the temporal and spatial properties of the exhibition medium to maximum effect, in order to move a visitor through a sequence of works arranged according to the time in which they were produced. A chronological display would, thus, seem like the logical means of introducing a marginalised narrative into the art historical mainstream.

The decision to instead thematise the exhibition was partly practical; its historical and global reach was so wide that it would be impossible to present the complexities of the

¹⁷ When an organising principle is coherently defined, it should, in turn, determine the physical structure of the exhibition space, the way that the space is delineated and also define the order and sequence in which the viewer encounters the material; it should thus facilitate the selection of artists, artworks and contextual information and therefore also direct the hanging of these artworks and the way in which they are spatially and visually related to each other; and finally it should guide the balance of visual, linguistic and interactive modes of communication. It is thus crucially important to get this right.

¹⁸ Boris Groys, 'On the Curatorship' in *Art Power*, Cambridge Mass, MIT Press, 2008, pp.44-45.

¹⁹ This is how Jorge Ribalta describes the exclusion of the Worker's Photography Movement from the modernist narrative told by major public art institutions. See: Guy Lane and Jorge Ribalta, *Workers Photography Movement*, 30th May 2011. Available online at: <http://www.foto8.com/live/worker-photography-movement/> (accessed 01/10/2014).

subject in the space available. However, there were several other advantages over the chronological hang, more directly connected to my counter-hegemonic aims. Firstly, a thematic approach is argued to engender a more active mode of viewing. The chronological hang, as Carol Duncan argues, constitutes passive, uncritical viewing subjects, because it was originally developed to present an image of artistic progress that cohered with the political and social development of a populace towards civilisation.²⁰ Moreover, a chronology presents history and politics as an inevitable process, rather than something that man actively plays a part in changing, and, therefore, disempowers its viewing subjects. Indeed, as Linda Nochlin has observed, the purpose of the recent anti-chronological move in contemporary curatorial practice was ‘to break up the idea of an uninterrupted flow’ and to counter the cathartic effect of a chronological model, which leads the viewer to conclude that they are living in the best possible world.²¹ The thematic hang would, more specifically, allow for the creation of incongruous juxtapositions between artworks, from dramatically different places and times, that could defamiliarise the visitor with depoliticised readings of the work and more fully engage them in the exhibition concept. Most importantly, a thematic approach would enable the articulation of a direct causal relationship between the ethico-political values of leftist artists and the decisions they make about how they organise their labour, produce display and distribute their art works.

What’s Left? was envisaged as a space where a ‘common symbolic framework’ could be laid out, interrogated, debated and redefined. Mouffe argues, that the common

²⁰ The chronological hang was first developed during the French Revolution to cohere with the ideology of the new ‘Cult of Reason’. The Cult of Reason was philosophically anthropocentric and, as such, the development of civilisation had to be re-presented to the people as emanating not from an absolutist source, but from the people themselves, as a symbolic presentation of social progress. Thus, in the new rational, public art museum objects were not, as they were previously in the princely galleries, arranged so as to present a narrative of the world circulating and emanating from a single powerful figure, but were instead arranged chronologically and by ‘national school’, in an unfolding sequence of rooms, so as to present an image of artistic progress that cohered with the political and social development of a populace towards civilisation and as therefore climaxing in the current ideal audience, the democratic modern citizen. The administrators of the Louvre, for example, stated that the central objectives of the new display techniques were to represent ‘the progress of art and the degrees of perfection to which it was brought by all those peoples who have successively cultivated it’. For more on the development of the chronological hang see: Carol Duncan, *Civilising Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*, Routledge, London, 1995, p.25.

²¹ The so-called ‘anti-chronological’ move was part of the broader counter-hegemonic agenda in post-1989 curatorial practice that I described in chapter one. It was intended to challenge the ideological positioning of art as a linear progression that always ultimately leads to abstraction and to fragment and disarticulate the neoliberal ‘end of history’ narrative, which presents the current model of liberal democracy as the, the final point, the highest conclusion, of a process of civilisation. Unlike chronologies, thematic displays do not infer a linear historical progression that naturally leads to the privileging of the most contemporary artistic developments and political forms. After 1989 the thematic hang gradually became more prominent, eventually becoming the primary method of presenting art in public art institutions. MoMA’s experimental collection re-hangs, *Modern Starts: People, Places, Things and Making Choices; Open Ends* (1999-2001), the inaugural Tate Modern collection hang arranged around *Still Life, Landscape, History and The Nude*, and the Pompidou Centre’s, *The Big Bang* (2007) are testament to this broad change in curatorial practice. See: Sarah Boxer, ‘Snubbing Chronology as a Guiding Force in Art’, *The New York Times*, September 2, 2000.

symbolic framework of modern pluralist democracy:

... is the expression of 'liberty and equality for all'. Those are its 'ethico-political principles'. But, of course, those shared principles can be interpreted in many different ways. After all, what is liberty? What is equality? And who belongs to this 'all'?²²

I, thus, argued that we must construct the exhibition as an 'agonistic' 'space of encounter', where the viewer could come in to contact with different interpretations of the foremost shared values of the Left.²³ It was equally important, however, to situate these values in terms of how they are put into practice. As Mouffe argues, the project of radical leftist democracy can only succeed by 'pushing our societies to really put into practice the ideals that they profess'.²⁴ *What's Left?*, therefore, proposed an exhibition based around either the core values (collectivity, solidarity, equality, social progress) or around the specific strategies that artists have developed in relation to these values (forming collectives, integrating craft techniques into the production process, optical and kinetic techniques, and so on). I argued that the former would allow us to best situate politics as something defined by core values and beliefs, whereas the latter, would have the advantage of firmly positioning art as a production process.

However, when we came to apportioning works to the sections we had devised, several problems emerged. The first was a problem of overlap that meant, for example, that one artist could be positioned just as purposefully in the section on collectivity as equality.²⁵ Organising the works around the strategies the artists developed made the selection and organisation of works more precise. However, it proved difficult to artificially separate out the artists' strategies. Taking Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio's *Industrial Paintings* as an example, it was important to convey how he aimed to combat the alienating effects of industrial production by introducing play, chance and collective working, into the processes of manufacture. However, we could have equally chosen to

²² Chantal Mouffe, 'Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices?' in Dr Shep Steiner and Trevor Joyce (Eds.) *Cork Caucus: On Art, Possibility and Democracy*, Revolver, 2005 p.165

²³ For a discussion of the exhibition as a 'space of encounter' see: Paul Basu and Sharon Macdonald, 'Introduction: Experiments in Exhibitions, Ethnography, Art and Science' in Paul Basu and Sharon Macdonald (eds.) *Exhibition Experiments*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2007, pp.14-17.

²⁴ Julia Korbik and Chantal Mouffe, 'Populism is a Necessity: Interview with Chantal Mouffe, in *The European*, 02.05.2014. Available online at: <http://www.theeuropean-magazine.com/chantal-mouffe--4/8420-why-the-eu-needs-populism> (accessed 18.05.2015).

²⁵ 'The search for *alternative economies*' was an anomalous category as it is not a value in itself but rather an approach to achieving equality and social progress.

focus on how he intended to embed the values of equality in his work by democratising the distribution and exchange mechanisms for art.²⁶

A group of curators and academics, who were asked to review the exhibition proposal in its early stages, reported that there were too many omissions in the narrative that we had constructed, and criticised the organising principle for being subjective.²⁷ It may be possible to justify any omission, rationally, when presenting a monographic exhibition of an artists' oeuvre (armed with a Catalogue Raisonné) or when producing a collection display, as there is a finite number of possible works that could be included. However, it is important to acknowledge that it will *never* be possible for survey exhibitions that are dealing with large time frames and broad subjects, to be encyclopaedic or objective. This is particularly true when the field of possibilities was as vast as *this* exhibition, which was bringing together works from over 200 years of history, and was attempting to be global in reach. Moreover, as I stated earlier, one of my central counter-hegemonic objectives was to disarticulate the idea of the exhibition as an ideologically neutral space and doing this involved being up front about the subjectivity and fallibility of our decisions. It was the first time this approach would be taken to framing the relationship between politics and artistic production and, though there would inevitably be important omissions, it would still provide a valuable platform for future exhibitions to build upon. Nonetheless, the feedback highlighted a need for a more rigorous organising principle that allowed the works, selected for the exhibition, to be placed more precisely. For inspiration, I turned, like WHW, to Brecht.

Brecht advocated using an episodic approach to structure theatre productions, where each scene could be isolated as a distinct 'episode' that could function as a separate story in its own right. Each 'episode' would be montaged with the others, but through jumps, curves and tangents rather than neat linear progression. Recurrent characters, themes, problems, questions and leitmotifs would run through the different episodes

²⁶He used the logic of overproduction to produce rolls up to 145 metres in length in order to ensure the price was kept low. He also sold paintings by the metre, off the roll, to subvert the commodity fetishism encouraged by capitalist ideology. See: Nicola Pezolet, 'The Cavern of Antimatter: Giuseppe "Pinot" Gallizio and the Technological Imaginary of the Early Situationist International', *Grey Room*, Winter 2010, No. 38, pp.62-89.

²⁷ This included conversations with Nicholas Cullinan, then Curator at Tate Modern, Jonathon Harris, at that time Professor in Art History at Liverpool University, Lynda Morris, Curator, EAST, Norwich, and Lisa Le Feuvre, Henry Moore Gallery, Leeds.

to loosely knit them together, but they could, technically, be shuffled around and placed in any order. Brecht argued that:

For a genuine story to emerge it is most important that the scenes should, to start with, be played quite simply one after the other... the individual scenes retain their own meaning; they yield (and stimulate) a wealth of ideas; and their sum, the story, unfolds authentically without any... directing of subordinate, purely functional component parts to an ending in which everything is resolved.²⁸

Brecht argued that, in order to develop a radical leftist theatrical form that could stimulate genuine social change, it was crucial to avoid building narratives that would artificially lead to a cathartic resolution; where there is no problem left to solve, nothing left to do and the viewer is, therefore, given no reason to act. He contended that an episodic structure would help constitute more active politicised subjects by presenting the viewer with a problem, and positioning them as an agent of social change. Inspired by Brecht, I argued that the episodic structure could equally be applied to exhibition-making, in order to activate more critical viewing subjects, inspired to challenge the neoliberal consensus.

In my review of exhibitions of political art I came across one exhibition that did just this: *Forms of Resistance: Artists and the Desire for Social Change from 1871 to the Present* (Van Abbemuseum, 2007-2008). It used an episodic structure, organising the work around four specific historical moments —the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution, May 1968, and the world after the fall of the Berlin Wall.²⁹ This exact approach, was not appropriate to *What's Left?* because it built a chronological narrative and implied that artists have been the catalysts for important political events or social transformations – an overstatement I was keen to avoid making. However, I proposed a different type of episodic structure that instead emphasised how politics

²⁸ John Willet, *Brecht On Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, Hill and Wang, New York and Methuen, London, 1986, p.279.

²⁹ There are other examples of experimental approaches to chronology. Since the thematic usurped the chronology as the dominant hegemonic form, curators in medium-sized institutions, in particular, have begun to revisit the chronological hang as a newly extricated and potentially counter-hegemonic experimental form. The Lentos Kunstmuseum in Linz, for example, recently opened a chronological display entitled *The collection 1900-1960* (2010-11), where they intervened in a strict chronology by placing a contemporary artwork in each section, in order to provide the 'shock' needed to break the passive gaze. See: Marjatta Hölz, 'Interventions and participation in curating art collections: Interview with Stella Rollig', in *On Curating*, Issue 1, *Reinterpreting collections*, December 2011. *Forms of Resistance: Artists and the Desire for Social Change from 1871 to the Present*, Van Abbemuseum, 22nd September 2007 – 6th January 2008. For more details see: [http://vanabbemuseum.nl/en/browseall/?tx_vabdisplay_pi1\[ptype\]=18&tx_vabdisplay_pi1\[project\]=114&cHash=5c1c5b2eac37267c44e73462241d15f](http://vanabbemuseum.nl/en/browseall/?tx_vabdisplay_pi1[ptype]=18&tx_vabdisplay_pi1[project]=114&cHash=5c1c5b2eac37267c44e73462241d15f) (accessed 13/12/12).

had influenced the artist's work. I proposed a montage of 8-10 case studies, or 'episodes' that focussed on how an individual artist or collective made displayed *and* distributed their work. Each episode would act as a monographic lens through which we would tell the wider story of how leftist values have influenced the way that artists make and do their work. These episodes would function as independent stories that unfolded in a loose thematic sequence-cohering around specific problems common to leftist artists — to provide an overarching narrative that generated more ideas, problems and questions than it solved. By selecting case studies, where the artists' approach raised or attempted to resolve an important critical question, I argued that we could retain the didactic and contextual function of a chronological approach, without offering a cathartic resolution or appearing to be encyclopaedic.



Fig. 40. Screenshots taken from a Google Sketchup Model (December 2012), which proposed an episodic treatment of the Neo-Impressionists work. Image by Lynn Wray

The primary rationale for this episodic model was that it would allow the time and space to focus on each particular artist or collective. It could present more complex concepts to a broad audience base: by enabling the inclusion of more contextual material and innovative interpretation techniques we could build a more in depth argument about how left-wing values have influenced art practice. In a case study that examined how we could curate a display of Neo-Impressionist work (See App. 1), I argued that an episodic structure would be the only way to ensure that we could

effectively communicate challenging and unfamiliar concepts to a broad audience base.³⁰ I argued, for example, that it would be extremely challenging to articulate clearly how the Anarchist-Communist concept of ‘individual autonomy through collective harmony’ had influenced the Neo-Impressionists evolution of pointillism into a collective, scientific ‘divisionist’ methodology, through the exhibition form. It would be even more difficult in a limited space.³¹ Moreover, I reasoned that the episodic structure would effectively resolve the problem we had ascribing each artist or collective to a specific category.

The photographs of objects originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions.

Fig 41. (Left) ‘An alle Künstler (To all artists!)’ Arbeitsrat für Kunst, Fig. 42. (Centre) ‘Ceramic Teapot’ by Theodor Bogler and Fig. 43. (Right) Wilhelm Wagenfeld and Carl Jakob Jucker, Table Lamp.

A further case study rationalising a display of early Bauhaus works (see App. 1), allowed me to demonstrate how we might use an episodic structure to present a unified body of material that could demonstrate the ideas and values of the Bauhaus, as an institution, in relation to Gropius’ original ‘Bauhaus idea’.³² Gropius’ founding

³⁰ My conclusion was backed up by the results of a survey Tate conducted in order to test out responses to the concept and proposed titles (see App. 2). It demonstrated that, above all else, it was crucially important that we effectively articulated the central concept of the exhibition and tell this story fully enough that people would be able to both learn from it and actively question the material presented. My analysis of the results showed that the majority of respondents found the exhibition appealing because they felt they could learn something new and because it would provide a different way of understanding works they were already familiar with. For example, one respondent stated that the main appeal of the exhibition lay in ‘the fact that I have never particularly thought about how political leanings could have an impact on the arts, and a desire to learn more about how this could/does and has happened’. Others stated that it was appealing as an ‘opportunity to learn about art history from a left wing point of view’ or because they have ‘rarely seen exhibitions tackle these themes directly’. When asked what they would find unappealing about the exhibition several respondents stated that they were concerned that the exhibition would be too ‘exclusive’, ‘pretentious’, ‘intellectual’ or ‘complex’, however others did not want to be ‘preached to’ or ‘told what to think’. These results therefore suggested that it was important to find the right balance between providing sufficient and clear information about the works and affording people the opportunity to form their own critical responses.

³¹ This argument is particularly difficult to communicate to a lay audience as Anarchist-Communism is not a well-known ideology and the Neo-Impressionists are not generally understood to be either a collective or overtly political. Moreover, despite the abundance of literature that documents their association with Anarchist-Communism, the Neo-Impressionists had never been shown as part of a group exhibition of political art before.

³² The idea was to reinvent the Guild system of apprentices, journeymen and masters, in order to create a new model of teaching, which enabled students to integrate craft skills and artistic principles through the intellectual and physical process of making socially useful objects.

manifesto explained his intention to break down false hierarchies between art and craft, and to disalienate the making and using of industrial objects, by imbuing them with artisanal values and techniques. This idea was developed during Gropius' chairmanship of the Socialist organisation, the Arbeitsrat für Kunst (Workers Council for Art), whose mission was to create a more purposeful and useful form of art befitting a Socialist society. It was essential to make visible the craft-based training methods and to show how these techniques were later embedded in the production of industrial objects.³³ An episodic structure would enable us to do this and to ground the display with archival material from the Arbeitsrat für Kunst, which could make Gropius' original Socialist vision explicit. It would also allow us the space to problematise our own arguments, raise further questions and stimulate a critical response. For example, by including a ceramic teapot, produced by a right-wing conservative Theodor Boegler, we posed the question: for an idea to be classified as leftist does every person who has worked towards its realisation have to subscribe to the same political beliefs?³⁴

The curatorial team were concerned that the inclusion of significant amounts of contextual material, in the episodic approach, would make the exhibition tiring for the viewer.³⁵ Although it was possible to present the material in an engaging fashion, too much information might overwhelm visitors. There was the additional danger that it would restrict the use of juxtaposition as a curatorial strategy through which to directly compare the work of different artists. It could, thus, restrict the development of new meaning by foreclosing the visual and tacit associations that visitors might make between different artists work and their methodologies. Finally, and most importantly, treating the subject as separate case studies would, undoubtedly, undermine an idea

³³ Not all of the teachers and students at the Bauhaus were politically active or motivated by left-wing values. Several of the masters at the Bauhaus including Wassily Kandinsky and Johannes Itten were, for example, more profoundly influenced by mystical or spiritual philosophies, including Theosophy and the Eastern philosophy of Mazdaznan than secular socialism or Marxism. Even Gropius, when the political situation in Germany intensified, tried to play down the idea that the Bauhaus was a political institution with a dogmatic ideology.

³⁴ To give a further example, I proposed to include a table lamp designed by Wilhelm Wagenfeld and Carl Jakob Jucker. Though this lamp is often held up as an exemplar of the Bauhaus project, it was deemed a failure in terms of the *Bauhaus Idea* – 'a crippled bloodless picture in glass and metal' – because time and the skill needed to craft the perfect forms of the lamp, meant that it could never achieve a 'socialism of vision'. By introducing this element of negative judgement, and the possibility of failure, I proposed that we could stimulate critical reflection on the works. See: Frederic J. Schwarz, *Wilhelm Wagenfeld and Carl Jakob Jucker: Table Lamp. 1923-24*, in Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman (Ed.), *Bauhaus: Workshops for Modernity*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2009, pp.138-141

³⁵ For more information on museum fatigue see: Gareth Davey, 'What is museum fatigue', *Visitor Studies Today* 8, no. 3, 2005 pp.17-21. Steve Bitgood has conducted extensive research on the Museum environment and suggested several different methods by which the curator or exhibition designer can counter museum fatigue and create more engaging displays. One suggestion Bitgood makes is that museums should enable visitors to take regular breaks 'because they will help to replenish attentional capacities'.

that I argued was essential: to bring different political positions, and different methods of putting these values, into agonistic confrontation with each other. It was therefore necessary to develop an alternative organising principle that could work more effectively to stimulate the visitors' political passions.

Chantal Mouffe argues that peoples cannot be mobilised towards political engagement when they are distanced from their own values and beliefs, or by appealing to rationality alone. For Mouffe, it is the 'affective dimension' that is key to engaging people with a value-driven politics. She argues that it is crucial for the Left 'to mobilise and to foster affect in order to create collective forms of identification that could deepen democracy'.³⁶ This call to affect is emblematic of a so-called 'affective turn' that has pervaded the critical thinking of scholars across social sciences, humanities and media studies.³⁷ In a clear break with both post-modernism and the associated radical anti-authorialism, these studies allow affect to be understood as something that is both culturally produced, and can be specifically directed to provoke a collective, social or political response. The theory of affect 'suggests that what we imagine to be individual and specific—impulses, attitudes, emotions, and feelings—in fact have a social, historical, and therefore shared dimension'.³⁸

Whilst there are a considerable number of recent critical studies of affective practice in film, theatre and literature there are very little that relate specifically to exhibition-making. Gillian Whiteley's analysis of the use of 'affect' by the British artist and writer Jeff Nuttall, in the production of exhibition environments such as *STigma*, is one of the few critical studies that connects the strategic use of affective devices to political intent and effect.³⁹ Moreover, there is little evidence, in the curator-led discourse, of the theory of affect asserting any significant influence on contemporary exhibition-making, in institutional contexts. However, Gavin Wade has argued, that the organisation and design of an exhibition can be used affectively, to produce a specific psychological

³⁶ See Mouffe's argument about the strength of right-wing populism and the need for 'affective politics' in Julia Korbik and Chantal Mouffe, 'Populism is a Necessity: Interview with Chantal Mouffe', in *The European*, 2nd May, 2014. Available online at: <http://www.theeuropean-magazine.com/chantal-mouffe-4/8420-why-the-eu-needs-populism> (accessed 18.05.2015)

³⁷ This turn has been most prominently theorised by Patricia Ticineto Clough. See: Patricia Ticineto Clough, *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2007.

³⁸ Rachel Greenwald Smith, 'Postmodernism and the Affective Turn', *Twentieth Century Literature* 57, no.3/4, 2011, p.423.

³⁹ Gillian Whiteley Sewing the 'subversive thread of imagination': Jeff Nuttall, Bomb Culture and the radical potential of affect, *The Sixties*, 4:2, 2001, pp.109-133. A further example is Michelle Henning's analysis of affect in museums. See: Michelle Henning, 'Legibility and Affect: Museums and New Media', in Sharon MacDonald and Paul Basu, *Exhibition Experiments*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2007, pp.29-32

effect on the viewer, or to encourage the viewer to think or act in a certain way.⁴⁰ By using the adjective 'affective', in relation to curatorial practice, I am referring to strategies that are intended to tap into, the non-conscious feelings, emotions and passions, of the visitor in order to, potentially, transform their beliefs and attitudes. As Whiteley argues, 'an understanding of affective practices as potentially transformative opens up the potential of their effects to be considered political'.⁴¹

Although it is variously deemed either naively optimistic, ruthlessly totalitarian or patronisingly populist, to begin speaking about using affect in a strategic way within a political art exhibition, it is important to accept that all narrative is aimed at directing a viewer's thought, and, if I was conceiving of the exhibition as a political medium, I *was* consciously trying to effect the viewer.⁴² I therefore considered the possibility of working against the disingenuous 'anti-authorial' turn in contemporary curatorial practice and developing an organising principle that could use those visual and 'affective' aspects of the exhibition medium that differentiate it from a written text, in order to stimulate people's political passions.⁴³ However, it was important to ensure that the viewer could still think critically about the work and the issues presented, so that the exhibition did not become a totalitarian exercise of manipulation. I asked, therefore: could Mouffe's advocacy of 'affect' and Brecht's emphasis on critical distance, be articulated together to create an alternative organising principle that could utilise the affective dimension of the exhibition medium, without disempowering the viewer?

⁴⁰ Gavin Wade, 'Interview with Paul O'Neill', London, 2 June 2005 in Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture*, Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press, 2012 p. 95

⁴¹ Gillian Whiteley Sewing the 'subversive thread of imagination': Jeff Nuttall, Bomb Culture and the radical potential of affect, *The Sixties*, 4:2, 2001, p.126

⁴² I am fully conscious that by stating that I am aiming to have a particular effect on the viewer by using the affective properties of the exhibition medium, it could open me up to accusations of totalitarian manipulation. However, as Simon Sheikh argues all exhibition projects are in reality attempting to constitute a public or a counter-public and it is thus clearly disingenuous to claim that such exhibitions are not organised and structured strategically to influence and direct the viewer's thoughts. It was therefore important to rationalise the effects and affects I want to achieve, as only by doing this from the outset, would I have any chance of success. Though I don't believe it is possible to determine exactly the effect the decisions we make will have on the individual viewer, the basis of any counter-hegemonic project must necessarily include an attempt to transform the thinking or actions of the audience in some way, whether they are realisable or not, and it is thus important to attempt to define clearly what these intentions are. See: Simon Sheikh, *Constitutive Effects: The Techniques of the Curator*, *Curating Subjects*, Open Editions/De Appel, London, 2011, pp. 178-179

⁴³ In the previous section, I found that deconstructive strategies were often based on the mistaken assumption that the curator has complete authorial control over how the exhibition is read and experienced by the viewer. I argued that the curator has limited control over which works they show and how they can show it for pragmatic and logistical reasons, artworks themselves are open texts, and the viewer already has the agency in most exhibitions to read against the grain, dictate their own path, form their own connections and look at the work independently of the text and captions placed next to it. This is why I contended that it is important to not construct the exhibition as if it were a written text, but rather to make full use the visual, special and affective properties of the exhibition.

Though they may seem, at face value, contradictory, Brecht's model of Epic Theatre is highly compatible with Mouffe's agonistic practice. In his essay *Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction*, Brecht describes the dramatic form as characterised by 'a particular passion of utterance, a certain emphasis on the clash of forces'.⁴⁴ This description bears an uncanny resemblance to Mouffe's proposals for the construction of agonistic public institutions. In her emphasis on stimulating political passions and bringing different positions into antagonistic confrontation with each other, Mouffe is effectively advocating the articulation of politics through the dramatic form. It is often wrongly assumed that Brecht's 'Epic Theatre' is the complete antithesis of the dramatic form. However, he was seeking to develop a method that combined both epic and dramatic elements. Just as the bourgeois novel brought a dramatic element into the epic, Brecht sought to bring an epic element into a dramatic production.⁴⁵

Indeed, in defining the criteria for his model of 'Epic Theatre', Brecht highlights the importance of using distancing *in combination with* affect. He states that, if produced successfully, epic theatre 'turns the spectator into an observer but... arouses his capacity for action'.⁴⁶ It becomes clear that Brecht was not opposed to the use of 'affect' per se, rather he was opposed to the use of affective techniques as part of a cathartic strategy, or as a means of 'hypnotising' people into a passive acceptance of the dominant ideology. If the affective properties of a form could, on the other hand, be used to heighten contrast, construct polemics and create provocations, they could be used in tandem with distancing strategies, to jar people from their 'initial numbness' and create a situation in which the viewer is engaged and ready to act, but is always suspicious and always critical. Brecht, thus, viewed the balance between affective and distancing strategies not as an irreconcilable contradiction, but rather as a dialectical tension that could underscore the construction of his new model of counter-hegemonic, radical theatre. Moreover, just as Mouffe argues that: 'properly, political questions always involve decisions which require a choice between conflicting

⁴⁴ John Willet, *Brecht On Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, Hill and Wang, New York and Methuen, London, 1986 p.70

⁴⁵ The word 'epic' is extricated from its association with the written form and conflated with the word 'theatre' in order to signify that it could and should be integrated *with* the existing dramatic form.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

alternatives', Brecht's Epic model was aimed at making the 'viewer face something' that forces them 'to take decisions'.⁴⁷

In Chapter Two my analysis of WHW's use of 'affective' properties of the exhibition medium at the 11th Istanbul Biennial provided an example of an effective application of the Brechtian strategy of *Verfremdungseffekt*.⁴⁸ Brecht's V-Effect aimed to counter the emphasis on empathetic identification in Aristotelian dramatic theatre and its hypnotic and seductive properties. However, WHW argued that it is, conversely, the myth of objectivity that lulls the viewer into passive consumption in white cube exhibitions. Thus, in this context, the V-Effect must do the reverse and exaggerate the fictive and affective qualities, so as to de-naturalise and de-neutralise the exhibition. By using the affective properties of the exhibition medium, they were not trying to trick the viewer into passive acceptance. Rather, by clearly setting out their political objectives and curatorial intent, they aimed to work on both non-conscious affective registers and conscious critical registers to persuade the viewers – as rational, intelligent and equal critical subjects – of the validity of their point of view and mobilise them to act. I applied this logic to the formation of an original organising principle, which integrated Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* with the agonistic and affective practices advocated by Mouffe. I called this model 'Epic Agonism'.

The photograph originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions.

Fig 44. (Left) Page from Bertolt Brecht's *War Primer*, 1955. Fig. 45 (Right) Enlarged view of the Quatrain text featured as a caption in the same page.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ See: What, How and for Whom?, 'This is the 11th Istanbul International Biennial curators' text' in What, How and for Whom? (eds.), *What Keeps Mankind Alive? The Texts: 11th International Istanbul Biennial*, Yapi Kredi Publications (Turkey), 2009, p.98-102

Brecht's photo-book *War Primer*, comprised of four-line epigrams called quatrains, provided further inspiration.⁴⁹ The quatrains offered alternative captions to what Brecht described as inherently 'bourgeois photographs', and were intended to create a distancing effect that extricated the viewer from passive consumption and allowed them to critically examine the capitalist ideology he felt was propagated through these images. The book thus demonstrated that Brecht was able to transfer the principles of 'epic theatre' into a completely different form. It also showed how a tight and repetitive structure could allow incongruous juxtapositions to become affective and have an effect. The consistent structure of the poems and photographs, the stable pattern and rhythm, acts as a narrative device that controls the pace and builds the poetic intensity. I envisioned the groupings of work within the exhibition as 'quatrains' that would combine the distancing and affective poetic devices that Brecht used within the book to create of an agonistic space of encounter.

The exhibition would be made up of six quatrains. Each quatrain would be conceived as a physically delineated, self-contained section based around a specific problem that leftist artists commonly sought to address, such as 'how to combat alienation in production?' or a common approach, such as the development of a collective scientific methodology. In reference to Brecht's epigrams, every quatrain would follow the same tight quadratic structure, comprised of four concise selections of work by different artists or collectives. The work within each quatrain would cut across conventional art-historical boundaries, being taken from as different political contexts, times and places as possible. Incongruous juxtapositions would, thus, be created, that initially disorients the viewer and de-familiarise the work, allowing them to look at it afresh and with critical distance. However, I proposed to use visual rhyme and affective techniques to signify that subjective, thinking people brought the works together for a reason. As Brecht advocates, it would negate the viewer's existing understanding, but then negate this negation, by highlighting a new unity. The aim is to make the familiar strange – to prevent the viewer from looking at familiar works passively, by opening up a crack through which it is possible to see and perceive them differently.

⁴⁹ During my research into possible works for the exhibition, I came across these photobooks. Though committed Marxist Brecht is mainly known for his revolutionary work in theatre, he also produced a series of photobooks, where he employed the same devices of *Verfremdungseffekt* (the Alienation Effect) and distancing in order to make the 'familiar strange' and distance the viewer from passive consumption of the material. I suggested including Brecht's 1955 photobook *War Primer*, in which he juxtaposed images cut from popular magazines with four-line epigrams called quatrains.

In my case study (see app. 1), I fully rationalise a ‘quatrain’, addressing how leftist positions on collectivism have differently influenced artists groups to develop scientific — or ‘objective’ — collective working practices.⁵⁰ It brought together the work of the Neo-Impressionists, Spanish collective Equipo 57, from the 1950’s, the Slovenian collective OHO from the early 1970’s, and the on-going participatory art project *Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef*, initiated by the Los Angeles-based Institute for Figuring, in 2005. These groups were informed by distinct ideologies — from Anarchist-Communism to orthodox Marxism, and from Reism to Eco-feminism. Bringing these works together would make the point that these questions have had a consistent influence on left-wing artists across different places and times — even amongst those who subscribe to different ideologies. It would highlight both the common political values — the common symbolic framework — that could define a radical leftist project.



Fig. 46. Screen shot showing the ‘Collective Scientific Methodology’ Quatrain I outline in Appendix 1, taken from the Google Sketch Up 3D Model I produced in order to experiment with juxtapositions in relation to how the work would physically fit in the space. Paul Signac’s *In the Time of Harmony* is on the left and Equipo 57’s series of gouache paintings for their film *Interactividad Cine I*. Please note that these models were not intended to represent my approach to installation. Image by Lynn Wray

However, the structure would also enable us to communicate that there is not one *correct* way of addressing these issues. Indeed, by featuring completely different resolutions to the problem posed, I argued that we could exploit the spatial and visual

⁵⁰ The relationship between scientific methodology and collective arts practice is based on the idea that if an artistic method is defined by scientific, rational or objective principles, it can be taught, shared and therefore used collectively. This idea is political as it is in direct opposition to the bourgeois conception that art should be the self-expression of an individual’s spiritual being and a product of their unique genius, which the capitalistic art market is contingent on.

properties of the exhibition medium to create an agonistic confrontation between these ideas. This approach was inspired by *Art and Propaganda: Clash of Nations 1930-1945*, held at Deutsches Historisches Museum in 2007, which, similarly, attempted to structure the exhibition as a space of encounter between different ideologies.⁵¹ It compared art produced under the Italian Fascism, National Socialism, Soviet Communism and the American 'New Deal' by juxtaposing work from each country on a system of four facing walls. This created a claustrophobic space of encounter that forced the viewers to make a judgement and consider their own political position.

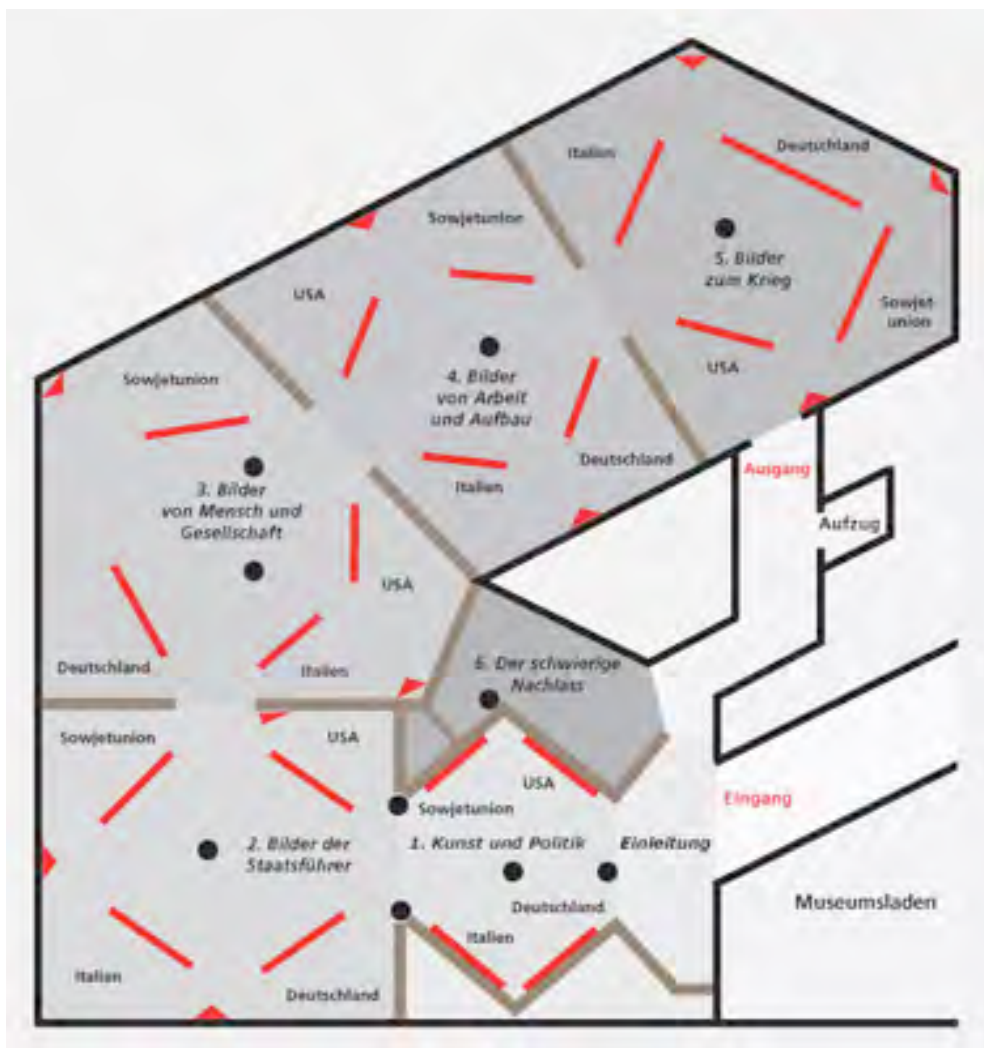


Fig. 47. Installation Plan for *Art and Propaganda: Clash of Nations 1930-1945*, Deutsches Historisches Museum, 2007. Image included in this thesis with kind permission of © Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin.

The visual rhyme within the quatrains would make it more apparent that the juxtapositions have been purposefully constructed to articulate a narrative or argument. An example that I expand upon in my case study (see App. 1) is the pairing

⁵¹ For more information see Deutsches Historisches Museum website: <http://www.dhm.de/ausstellungen/kunst-undpropaganda/english/index.html> (Accessed 08.07.2010)

of a sculpture of a hyperbolic form by the all-male collective Equipo 57, with a crocheted hyperbolic sculpture by female mathematician Dr Daina Taimina – for the Institute for Figuring’s Hyperbolic Coral Reef project. By using rhyme to enable a comparison between these two works, I aimed to provoke the audience to question their own assumptions when they encounter crafts traditionally associated with women. The use of crochet to generate hyperbolic models makes visual the mathematical and rational base of crochet as a medium, which, in turn, challenges the hegemonic notions that devalue the intellectual labour of craft skills.⁵²

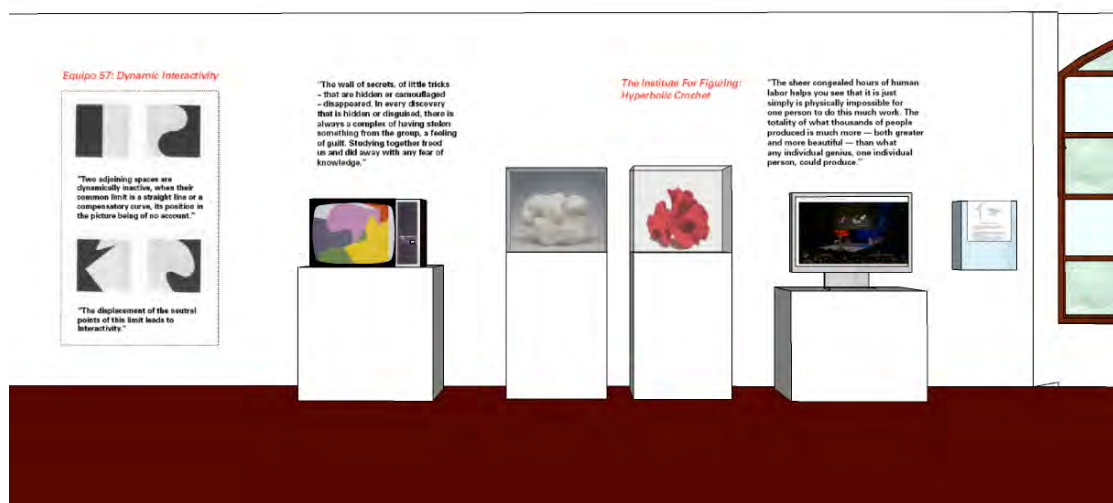


Fig. 48. Screen shot showing the ‘Collective Scientific Methodology’ Quatrain I outline in Appendix 1, Equipo 57’s film *Interactividad Cine I* and their Hyperbolic sculpture are shown on the left and Dr Daina Taimina’s hyperbolic crochet sculpture for *The Institute for Figuring* is shown alongside it on the right. Image Lynn Wray

The critical reaction to Documenta 12, however, highlighted the potential issue with using visual rhyme, as I propose; that it may be accused of aestheticising politics by making only ‘superficial’ connections between formal aspects of the work. Curators, Roger M. Buergel and Ruth Novak, were variously criticised and praised for stepping into artists’ territory by constructing juxtapositions through formal affinities. This included a juxtaposition between David Goldblatt’s *The Transported of KwaNdebele* (1983), and a 19th-century bridal veil from Tajikistan, for example. Jörg Heiser, writing for *Frieze*, declared ‘formal juxtaposition’ the most obnoxious feature of this exhibition.⁵³ Whilst Claire Bishop recognised the radical potential in the approach, finding the juxtapositions ‘unexpectedly breath-taking’. She argued that ‘the wunderkammer approach... slowed down perception and encouraged a thoughtful

⁵² The crochet model is actually a mathematically correct production of hyperbolic space, whereas the sculpture by Equipo 57 only mimics the appearance of a hyperbolic form.

⁵³ See: Jörg Heiser, ‘Mixed Messages: Documenta 12’ *Frieze*, Issue 109, September 2007. Available online: http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/mixed_messages/ (14.12.2014)

lingering in each gallery', and worked well precisely because it kept the aesthetic and the political 'in continual tension'.⁵⁴

The photographs originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. Fig. 49 was sourced at: <http://universes-in-universe.de/car/documenta/eng/2007/tour/wilhelmshoehe/img-10.htm> Fig. 50 was sourced at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/22/arts/design/22docu.html>

Fig.49 (Left) Paintings by Kerry James Marshall hang in the Old Masters Gallery among paintings created by Karel van Mander III around 1640. Fig. 50 Works by Anatoly Osmolovsky, Peter Freidl and Cosima von Bonin in the documenta-Halle at Documenta 12

However, she argued that Buerger and Novak undid their attempt to use radical juxtaposition to constitute more critical questioning viewing subjects, by failing to adequately contextualise the work. Their refusal to provide in-gallery texts, for example, was seen as an attempt to depoliticise the work and reduce it to formal-aesthetic considerations. This highlighted the importance of including adequate contextual information in *What's Left*. Moreover, Bishop argued that the curators use of classical music and auratic lighting, which 'seemed to compound – rather than complicate – the *bürgerlich* mood', positioned the curators as arbiters of 'good taste' and rendered the audience passive and comfortable.⁵⁵ This reinforced the importance of creating a different atmosphere for *What's Left?* that could work against the usual social conventions of the gallery space and potentially mobilise the visitors.

3.3 Defining a counter-hegemonic installation and interpretation strategy

Chapter Two concluded that curators of supposedly counter-hegemonic projects, who

⁵⁴ Bishop is distressed by her lack of ability to rationalise why the affective strategies at Documenta 12 worked. This may be because it challenged her own preconceptions about what skilful curating is and also threatened her own intellectuality? She states: 'The combination that affected me most, although I am bereft of explanations why, was David Goldblatt's black and white *The Transported of KwaNdebele* (1983), a photo story documenting gruelling commutes under South African apartheid, next to four 19th-century bridal veils from Tajikistan (in the Aue Pavilion). After three days I was unable to work out these conundrums and decided to listen to the S-Guide, hoping that Buerger's commentary would offer insights'. Claire Bishop, 'Vienna Inc.: The Analytic Documenta' in *Journal of Visual Culture*, vol. 7 no. 2, August 2008 p.207.

⁵⁵ Bishop reasons: I couldn't help feeling that this rarefied Viennese atmosphere could have been productively disrupted with musical accompaniment (if any were needed) more adequate to the schizophrenic selection of the art... however sceptical I feel about Tate Modern inviting The Klaxons to respond to Donald Judd, or The Chemical Brothers to Jacob Epstein, at least these initiatives embrace a more paradoxical and aggressively modern stance. *Ibid* pp.207-208.

uncritically defaulted to ‘white cube’ installations, had failed to understand the role that this mode of display plays in the neoliberal drive to restore class power. Tate Liverpool – despite a warranted reputation for experimentation in other areas – generally use a ‘white cube’ method of installation, consistent with the wider Tate brand for retrospective survey exhibitions. Occasionally, the curators experiment with using alternative colours to highlight certain works, but, in general, they use various shades of white for the wall, focus almost extensively on final art objects, hang work side by side at eye level, and leave ample space between works.⁵⁶ Although they tend to include more in-gallery texts than many other comparable museums, contextual information is still minimal. It was thus essential to investigate the possibility of other modes of display and address, which could better performed the counter-hegemonic objectives I have set out.

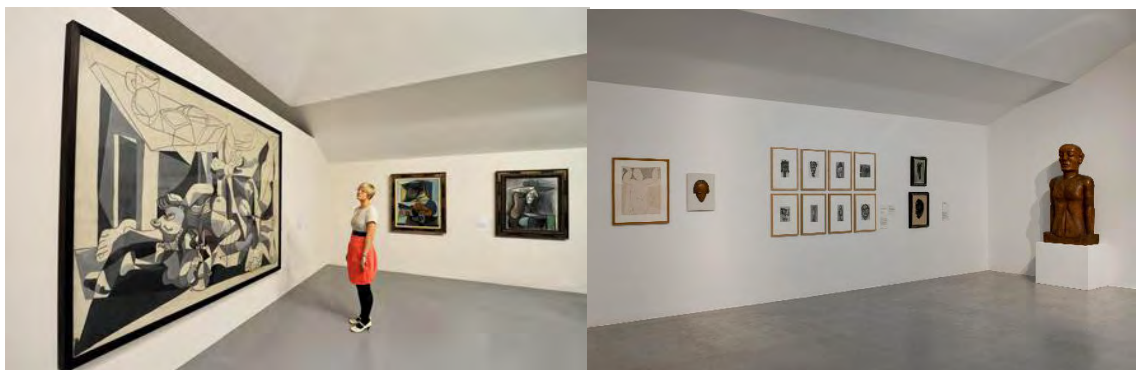


Fig. 51 (Left) Picasso: *Peace and Freedom*, Tate Liverpool, 2010 © Tate, photograph Roger Sinek and Fig. 52 (Right) *AfroModern: Journeys Through the Black Atlantic*, Tate Liverpool, 2010. © Tate, photograph Roger Sinek

As David Harvey argues, though the official rhetoric refuses to acknowledge even the existence of class divisions – ‘we are all middle-class now’ – the overriding aim of the neoliberal project is to restore class power in the hands of an increasingly small global elite.⁵⁷ He contends that neoliberal states use all of their public institutions to

⁵⁶ There are some exceptions to this general rule, such as the recent exhibition project produced by Claude Parent as part of the Liverpool Biennial in 2014, entitled *La colline de l’art*, which featured a specifically designed exhibition architecture that led the viewer up a series of ramps in accordance with the principles of ‘Fonction Oblique’. Indeed, Francesco Manacorda has attempted to challenge these standard modes of display used at Tate since he arrived in 2012. See: <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/blogs/what-happens-when-artists-break-gallery-rules> (accessed 19.04.2015).

⁵⁷ Harvey makes the following argument: ‘Redistributive effects and increasing social inequality have in fact been such a persistent feature of neoliberalisation as to be regarded as structural to the whole project. Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy, after careful reconstruction of the data, have concluded that neoliberalisation was from the very beginning a project to achieve the restoration of class power. After the implementation of neoliberal policies in the late 1970s, the share of national income of the top 1 per cent of income earners in the US soared, to reach 15 per cent (very close to its pre-Second World War share) by the end of the century. ... We can, therefore, interpret neoliberalisation either as a utopian project to realise a theoretical design for the reorganisation of international capitalism or as a political project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites... Neoliberalisation has not been very effective in revitalizing global capital accumulation, but it has succeeded remarkably well in restoring, or in some instances (as in Russia and China) creating, the power of an economic elite. The theoretical utopianism of neoliberal argument has, I conclude, primarily worked as a system of justification and legitimation for whatever

exaggerate class distinctions, and reinforce the idea that some people are naturally superior', in order to justify the increasingly unequal distribution of capital, power and resources.⁵⁸ Of all of the state's institutional frameworks, the public art institutions stand out as particularly accommodating ideological apparatus in the construction of consent for the restoration of class power, because they tend to reinforce class hierarchies.⁵⁹ The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has, for example, demonstrated that art museums play a vital role in furthering the vastly disproportionate accumulation and appropriation of 'cultural' and 'symbolic capital' amongst the dominant classes.

Bourdieu's *The Love of Art* (co-authored with Alain Darbel) used statistical analysis and interviews with people across Europe in the 1960s, to argue that art museums reinforce the idea of a superior, cultivated ruling class by concealing the means by which people learn about art in the museum itself.⁶⁰ The now ubiquitous 'white cube' mode of installation plays a key role in continuing this process of mystification.⁶¹ The development of the 'white cube' model was underpinned by four key principles from the 'science' of aesthetics; firstly, that art is a separate ontological category, distinct from craft and other forms of production; that things can be appreciated aesthetically (valued in themselves rather than for their functional purpose); that an aesthetic experience was both individually and socially beneficial; and finally, that the best way to enable people to aesthetically appreciate objects is to remove them from their

needed to be done to achieve this goal. The evidence suggests, moreover, that when neoliberal principles clash with the need to restore or sustain elite power, then the principles are either abandoned or become so twisted as to be unrecognizable'. See: David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, pp.16-19

⁵⁸ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005 pp.39-41

⁵⁹ The art institution has become such a symbol of the neoliberal version of democracy that countries seeking to join the neoliberal hegemony clamour to institute as many new art museums and biennials as possible. Bartomeu Mari, Director of MACBA, argues, for example, that the sudden rush to found more and more new art institutions in Spain was intended to ratify the democratic and liberal credentials of the former Fascist state to the neoliberal world, which would enable its entrance into NATO and the European Community. Art Institutions have thus retained their historical role of nation-building and identity formation, whilst facilitating the smooth integration of nations into a global neoliberal economy. See: Bartomeu Mari, *On Cultural Hegemony and its Implications for Cultural Production and Artistic Practice*, Apex Art conference, February 2004. Available online at: <http://www.apexart.org/conference/mari.php> (accessed 13.05.2013).

⁶⁰ They analysed in depth qualitative and quantitative evidence gathered from art museums across Europe, to demonstrate that although the doors of the museum remain literally open to all strata of society on an equal basis, the ability to gain anything from a visit to an art museum or to appropriate cultural goods is far from equally distributed. Rather this is predicated directly by the level of education and class position of each individual visitor at the museums. Pierre Bourdieu, Alain Darbel and Dominique Schnapper, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public*, Polity Press, Cambridge 1997.

⁶¹ The 'white cube' model, as we know it, was refined and popularised by Alfred Barr at MoMA, New York, but had its genesis in the modernist display techniques that were developed in Western Europe, and in particular Germany, during the early twentieth century. The white cube model, with art works evenly and generously spaced in a single row, and individually spot lit on a neutral white background, was not invented by MoMA – it was adapted by Alfred Barr from modes of display he had encountered on his European travels such as the Folkwang Museum, Essen – however MoMA can be said to have popularised and normalised this mode of presentation and installation. See: Christoph Grunenberg, 'Case Study One: The Modern Art Museum' in Emma Barker (eds.), *Contemporary Cultures of Display*, Yale University Press in association with The Open University, 1999 p. 30. Also see: Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*. MIT Press, Cambridge, 1998 p.66.

functional context.⁶² In the 'white cube', works of art are installed in accordance with these ideas: as autonomous objects, individually spotlighted with ample space between each object, accompanied by either no, or limited, contextual information. Art is, thus, presented as if the isolated final object ought to be appreciated for its own formal-aesthetic qualities and easily read, or at least decoded, by those with sufficient intelligence. Moreover, conversation between viewers is either directly forbidden or indirectly discouraged by the creation of a religious ambience in the gallery-space. Thus individual contemplation is figured as the only socially acceptable way of appreciating art. The 'white cube', thus, privileges formal-aesthetic appreciation and the disinterested 'way of looking' at art — commonly received through an affluent, bourgeois education.

However, most importantly, as Bourdieu and Darbel argue, the absence of contextual information and the focus on final objects in the 'white cube' works to maintain class hierarchies by giving the forceful impression that an appreciation of art is not learned but is, rather, the divine gift of the elite classes. They state:

So that cultured people can believe in barbarism and persuade the barbarians of their own barbarity, it is necessary and sufficient for them to succeed in hiding both from themselves and from others the social conditions which make possible not only culture as a second nature, in which society locates human excellence, and which is experienced as a privilege of birth, but also the legitimated hegemony of a particular definition of culture.⁶³

This mode of display thus encourages people to misrecognise the dominant position of the ruling class as a natural consequence of superior intellect. The illusion of natural superiority works to naturalise the increasing inequality in neoliberal society, strengthening the existing hegemony. The 'white cube' is thus perfectly suited to furthering the neoliberal project's primary object of restoring class power in the hands of an increasingly powerful ruling capitalist class.

⁶² See: James J Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World: From the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p.3.

⁶³ For Bourdieu the Gramscian concept of cultural hegemony is key to the elucidation of how art institutions have, and continue to, play a central role in maintaining class positions as it describes how the dominant social-class maintains and reinforces their position over the other social-classes primarily through the consistent persuasive presentation of its own particular ideas as universal, rational and objective so that they eventually become consensually accepted as common sense. Pierre Bourdieu, Alain Darbel and Dominique Schnapper, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public*, Polity Press, Cambridge 1997, pp.111-112.

Curators justify the suppression of contextual and explanatory information and the focus on final object in a myriad of different ways. Aesthetes argue that the artwork should be allowed to speak for itself. Constructivists, that the viewer should be given the opportunity to form their own reflexive interpretation in relation to their own knowledge-experience without the institution ‘contaminating’ the purity of this unique, subjective and ‘innocent’ knowledge. Others argue from contrasting ideological perspectives – from misplaced appeals to a protestant work ethic to the post-Adorno fear that popular culture will placate the working-class – that the provision of contextual and interpretative information devalues the social worth of viewing artwork. The high arts, are of higher value precisely because they require their audience to work and think hard. All of these positions place the responsibility for interpreting the artwork firmly in the hands of the viewer-as-reader and negate the authorial role of the artist and the curator. Any failure to construct meaning is therefore likely to be misrecognised by the viewer as their own failing, rather than a failure of the author to communicate effectively, and thus may reinforce any feelings of inferiority.⁶⁴

There have been great changes in the way that art museums and biennials operate since *The Love of Art* was published, including, most significantly, investment in education departments and a concerted drive to attract new audiences.⁶⁵ However, although it may appear, from the rise in audience figures, that art institutions are becoming more democratic, as Allan Wallach points out, they are simply attracting more of the same types of people.⁶⁶ So, for example, an audience survey of US museums, published in the 1990s, resulted in very similar data to the Bourdieu study, and led to the same conclusion: that the biggest determiners in American cultural participation in art are educational level and class position.⁶⁷ This was also the

⁶⁴ Furthermore, all of these positions assume that meaning can always be constructed from the act of simply looking at an isolated art object in its final form and relating it to our own existing knowledge-experience. Of course some meaning can be extracted in this way, for some people, but what if the art object does not speak to our personal experience or knowledge at all? Such an approach may indeed, close off ways of thinking about art that are just as worthwhile and relevant, and disempower the viewer.

⁶⁵ This has involved attempting to transform art museums into a more directly pleasurable, recreational and familiar form of leisure through the provision of facilities like, cafes, shops, and regular programmes of entertainment. The drive to attract new audiences has not simply been a democratic exercise it has also been a response to draconian demands to justify public funding in terms of footfall and an increased need to obtain private funding.

⁶⁶ See: Alan Wallach, *Class Rites in the Age of the Blockbuster: Distinction à l'américain, or the Art Museum in American Culture*, *Harvard Design Magazine*, no.11, Summer 2000, pp.48-54

⁶⁷ J Mark Davidson Schuster, *The Audience for American Art Museums*, National Endowment for the Arts, Research Division Report 23 (Washington DC, Seven Locks Press, 1991 pp.23-26 in Alan Wallach, *Class Rites in the Age of the Blockbuster: Distinction à l'américain, or the Art Museum in American Culture*, *Harvard Design Magazine*, no.11, Summer 2000, pp.48-54

conclusion of Tony Bennett et al. in *Culture, Class, Distinction*, when they reapplied Bourdieu's mode of analysis in *The Love of Art* to twenty-first century Britain.⁶⁸

Moreover, the 'white cube' model has become even more entrenched since 1989. It has become the hegemonic, common sense way to install and display art – partly because it's ideological function has been rendered so invisible that its aesthetic neutrality is misrecognised as political neutrality.⁶⁹

The 'white cube' model further reinforces the stability of the neoliberal hegemony, by constituting an atomised, individualistic public. As Mary-Anne Staniszewski has argued, in her influential study of the installation methods at MoMA, New York, the aestheticised, seemingly neutral exhibition method, created an 'extremely accommodating ideological apparatus for the reception of modernism in the United States — where the liberal, democratic ideal of the autonomous, independent individual, born to natural rights and free will, is the foundation of the American dream'.⁷⁰ The generous space between works was intended to encourage the viewer to not only look at the artwork as an autonomous object, isolated from its immediate relation to other works, but would also serve as a 'mirror' through which to look at and see themselves as autonomous individuals — un-dependent on social relations.⁷¹ In this way, it reduces collective identification and helps to prevent the collective action that would be required to really disrupt the status quo.

Tate Liverpool attempted to temper their use of white cube style installation, with a constructivist approach to their interpretation that was specifically developed to open up the programme to different social classes and counter the emphasis on formal-aesthetic appreciation of art.⁷² Constructivism, as an educational philosophy, is based

⁶⁸ Tony Bennett, Mike Savage, Elizabeth Silva, Alan Warde, Modesto Gayo-Cal and David Wright, *Culture, Class, Distinction*. CRES: Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change, Routledge, London, 2009

⁶⁹ Timeless, hermetic, and always the same despite its location or context, this globally replicated white cube has become almost categorically fixed, a private "nonplace" for the world of contemporary art biennials, one of those uncannily familiar sites, like the department stores, airports and freeways of our period of supermodernity described by anthropologist Marc Auge. See: Elena Filipovic, 'The Global White Cube', in *The Biennial Reader*, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern, 2010, pp.322-345 .

⁷⁰ Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*. MIT Press, Cambridge, 1998, p.70.

⁷¹ Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*. MIT Press, Cambridge, 1998, p.143.

⁷² Antoinette McKane quotes the Tate Liverpool educational planning document from 1988 (Tate Gallery Liverpool, Education Programme, June 1988, TG65b/04/4g) as evidence of their emphasis on social class. "As the above reference to the National Readership Survey's social class grouping indicates, Constructivism offered the potential to address criticisms, most famously those of Bourdieu and Darbel, that the art museum privileged the formal-aesthetic experience and taste inherited through an upper middle class upbringing and education. In theory, constructivism offers a model that validates the unique experience of every

on the principle that there is no single meaning contained within a work or a text because knowledge is actively constructed in the mind of the learner. An art museum application, thus, involves beginning from the principle that everyone is equally able to extract meaning from art by connecting it to their own personal lived experiences, prior knowledge, values and beliefs.

Tate Liverpool put these constructivist principles into practice through regular discussion-based workshops and by developing resource packs for educators to use. The workshops, primarily aimed at school groups, are led by artist-educators (locally-based freelance artists) who use a framework, entitled 'Ways of Looking' (see App. 3).⁷³ This framework is used to guide the learners through a process of discussion that critically examines particular artworks in terms of each learner's own unique knowledge, experience and worldview. They also programme regular activity-based workshops for families with creative play at the core, influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach.⁷⁴ However, these are held in a separate 'education studio', set off from the gallery. In the gallery itself, interpretation is generally limited to text, and takes the form of extended wall labels for each room and shorter (ninety word or less) captions for each individual work. These texts are written by an 'interpretation curator', specifically employed to ensure the text is accessible to a broad audience base and are intended to 'suggest rather than instruct' the viewer.⁷⁵ Adult orientated educational events have tended to follow the traditional museum approach, where a central establishment figure transmits knowledge to the learner, such as curator-led tours of the exhibition or a supplementary closed conference delivered by academics in response to the themes of the exhibition.⁷⁶

visitor". See: Antoinette McKane, *Tate Liverpool as a Force for Social Renewal? A Critical Study of Art Museum Education, Expansion and Urban Change (1988-2008)*, PhD Thesis, University of Liverpool, 2012, p.49

⁷³ The 'Ways of Looking' framework was developed by Tate Liverpool to formalise their constructivist methodology and serve as a resource for educators and caregivers visiting the gallery with groups (see app. 3).

⁷⁴ The Reggio Emilia approach is an educational philosophy developed by Loris Malaguzzi and initially applied and evolved in the preschools of the Reggio Emilia region in Italy. In this approach the child is viewed as an active constructor of knowledge, who has a right to develop their creative potential and to have control over their own learning experience. There is an emphasis on learning through making, research, documentation and experimentation.

⁷⁵ See: Antoinette McKane, *Tate Liverpool as a Force for Social Renewal? A Critical Study of Art Museum Education, Expansion and Urban Change (1988-2008)*, PhD Thesis, University of Liverpool, 2012, p.52

⁷⁶ Otherwise the programme for adults has mainly eschewed the pedagogical in favour of the social, with events such as Late Tate, where a visit to the gallery is combined with live music etc. In the past there has been an occasional evening class or course, including technical workshops or conceptual courses, such as ones focusing on printmaking or a specific theme relevant to the programme but this is becoming increasingly rare.

Opportunities to participate in creative making or critical discourse for the adult gallery visitor are, thus, exceedingly rare. Despite their innovative learning and interpretation strategies for children and young people, Tate Liverpool has tended to neglect the diverse educational needs, and cultural values, of the casual adult visitors to the gallery.⁷⁷ A notable exception to this is their experimental exhibition *The Fifth Floor* (2008), in which they worked with local people to try and find innovative ways to represent their cultural values in the gallery space.⁷⁸

The 'Ways of Looking' framework has come to direct the education methodology, including the in-gallery texts. It always begins from the personal position of the individual viewer – asking 'what do I bring?' before proceeding to invite them to interrogate the formal and material qualities of the object.⁷⁹ Because the viewer's perspective is paramount, information pertaining to the artists' intention is deemed irrelevant and is excluded from the in-gallery texts and captions. Although it is intended to open up new ways of thinking beyond the formal-aesthetic, it similarly gives primacy to vision, privileges the final art object, and treats it as something that meaning can always be gleaned from if you look at it hard enough and in the 'correct' way. The only real difference is that in the formal-aesthetic approach, the correct method is supposedly 'objective' looking, and in the 'ways of looking' approach, the correct method is interiorised, subjective looking. Though in a workshop situation this approach may well empower a learner, by conveying to them that their perspective is equally important. In a gallery setting, limiting the contextual and explanatory information often only serves to mystify the work and, thus, encourage the misrecognition that ensures the reinforcement of class distinctions. Moreover, by giving absolute primacy to the individual's subjective perspective, it constructs even more highly individualised viewing subjects, and, therefore, encourages exactly the kind of atomisation that the neoliberal project aims to produce. Tate Liverpool's

⁷⁷ The casual visitor to an exhibition is expected to already have sufficient visual literacy skills and prior knowledge to understand the concept and the individual works with only the information contained in extended wall texts or the short accompanying captions for guidance. McKane suggests that the focus on children is driven by a long-term audience-development aim of developing a large local and crucially sustainable audience for the gallery, which can be used to justify increased funding and expansion. See: Antoinette McKane, *Tate Liverpool as a Force for Social Renewal? A Critical Study of Art Museum Education, Expansion and Urban Change (1988-2008)*, PhD Thesis, University of Liverpool, 2012, p.54.

⁷⁸ For a critical evaluation of this exhibition project see: Antoinette McKane, *Tate Liverpool as a Force for Social Renewal? A Critical Study of Art Museum Education, Expansion and Urban Change (1988-2008)*, PhD Thesis, University of Liverpool, 2012, pp. 102-122.

⁷⁹ The significance of the production process and the social and political context in which the object was produced are acknowledged in the document, but only in terms of the viewer's immediate interpretation of that objective. Moreover, they are the final points of consideration in the document: the individual knowledge-experience of the viewer and the formal-aesthetic properties of the work are clearly prioritised.

existing 'Ways of Looking' methodology was not appropriate for an exhibition that that is intended to challenge the neoliberal hegemony and whose primary audience is likely to be comprised of casual adult visitors.

The 'ways of looking' methodology was particularly inappropriate for the exhibition concept that I proposed. It may be appropriate for collection displays where art objects are primarily intended to be interpreted as standalone objects – however, it makes much less sense in an exhibition that asks the audience to examine the work as a collective body of knowledge, and in relation to a distinct thesis. It makes no sense at all in an exhibition focussed on the intentionality of the artist and on production processes. Neither the intentions nor the processes are generally visible in the final art object itself, no matter how hard the viewer works or how intensively or reflexively they look at it. Hence, our central thesis cannot be articulated through final art objects alone. I argued that it was, therefore, essential to develop a different means to tell the story of each work's production, distribution and reception. This did not mean we could not ask our audience to critically reflect on the artwork in relation to their own knowledge-experience or particular political beliefs – far from it. Simply, that in order to get to this stage, the exhibition must provide the necessary information to communicate what the artist's political values were, and how they attempted to put these values into practice.

Positioning art as a production process

The Factory could supply another educational want, by showing the general public how its goods are made.⁸⁰

One of the most crucial aspects of the exhibition concept was that we were examining art as a production process, showing, in Morris's words 'how goods are made'. It is essential to stress that I proposed this approach with specific counter hegemonic intent. By positioning art as a 'form of production', I argued that we could counter the idea of art as a 'divine gift', beyond the capabilities of ordinary people. I aimed to challenge the consistently reproduced, repressive experience of viewing installations

⁸⁰ William Morris (1884) *A Factory As It Might Be*. First published in *Justice*, April-May 1884.

that position art as inherently distinct from other forms of production, at public art institutions.⁸¹ As Janet Wolff argues, 'art is always manufacture' and 'setting artistic work apart as something different from, and usually superior to, all other forms of work' is a process of mystification that serves capitalist interests by repressing the possibility that 'all forms of work are potentially creative in the same way'.⁸² I aimed to suggest that everyone can gain from participating in art-making activities and, conversely, that all forms of production have the potential to be creative and free under non-alienated conditions. I argued that this key concept must, therefore, guide the selection of works, what objects and contextual materials are shown, and, most importantly, the way in which they are displayed and interpreted in the gallery. Repositioning art as a production process involved defining a holistic means of effectively shifting the viewer's focus from form, subject and content, to the processes of production, reception and exchange.

My proposal was motivated by a strong belief that the social value of art is not aesthetic – the depravity of Fascism and Nazism surely proved that there is no connection between aesthetics and morality – but lies principally in the process of making art. It is my position that the public should not be encouraged to view art as either a 'divined' product, or as something only made by professional artists, but rather to see it as a normal and open part of 'our' everyday culture. The art-making process is a socially valuable experience that connects physical and intellectual labour in a way that all people can learn and gain pleasure from. From a counter-capitalist perspective, lay art-making is particularly valuable, as it can undermine commodity culture by engaging people in intellectual and physical labour processes, unrelated to the generation of wealth and extrinsic rewards.⁸³

⁸¹ In contrast to how their work is represented in art institutions, many artists have attempted to debunk the myth of the 'divine gift' by equating their work to other forms of production or by making visible (or audible) the necessity of the labour of the maker to the object. Robert Morris, for example, made *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961), a wooden box with a tape recorder inside that played back the sound of Morris constructing it with saw and hammer, to make absolutely clear that an art object is a product of a working process and the labour of the maker/s. Mayakovsky, to give another example, helpfully deconstructed the myth of divine inspiration by outlining the commonalities between the production of his poetry and other forms of manufacture in his famous pamphlet *How are Verses Made?* He lists his tools, the necessary social and material conditions and describes the 'process of poetic production' as a 'very difficult, very complex kind, but a manufacture,' that the verse-maker must engage in daily 'to perfect his craft'. The list of tools and description of the process can be found on pages 18-21. The quote 'Poetry is manufacture. A very difficult, very complex kind, but a manufacture... The work of the verse maker must be carried on daily to perfect his craft and to lay in poetic supplies' is found on page 57. See: Vladimir Mayakovsky, *How are Verses Made?* London, Jonathon Cape, 1970 pp. 18-57 (The original Russian pamphlet was published in 1926).

⁸² Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, Macmillan, London, 1981, p. 15.

⁸³ Csikszentmihalyi, for example, argues with his concept of intrinsic motivation, that activities such as art-making, chess, rock climbing and music are socially and individually beneficial as the level of concentration and effort they require, draws people to

I am not alone in this view. John Carey's book, *What Good are the Arts?*, compiles the perspectives of anthropologists, psychologists, cultural historians, policy-makers, criminologists, art in prisons facilitators, and cultural producers, to demonstrate that the positioning of art as something to worship, in Western societies, is counter-productive.⁸⁴ He states that:

Art worship is essentially consumerist. It situates art in picture galleries, concert halls, or theatres, where an audience attends passively to receive it... It sees art as a triumphal display of iconic masterwork, fashioned by geniuses. If we reverse these two positions we arrive at the idea of art as something done, not consumed, by ordinary people.⁸⁵

With this statement, he argues that positioning 'art-as-doing' in our public institutions, and encouraging people to participate in the production of art, would be a more effective route to social cohesion and personal happiness, than passive connoisseurship. He uses evidence from diverse fields to back up his argument. This includes Ellen Dissanyake's anthropological research into depression amongst American youths. She concluded that their feelings of inadequacy were connected to the loss of opportunities to exercise making skills and participate in group activities, in modern capitalist society.⁸⁶

My rationale was, therefore, based on the Marxist logic that any meaningful critique of capitalism must be concerned with exposing the radical contradiction between capitalist modes of production and man as a creative being. It must reflect the belief that 'a better, more human way of life, consists in free, creative labour'.⁸⁷ Though some claim that post-Fordist working practices, and technologies, have begun to resolve this contradiction, the early examples of small, specialised workshops employing highly

invest in an activity for the a quality of experience rather than any extrinsic reward. See: George E. Hein, *Learning in the Museum*, Routledge, Oxon, 2000, p.145.

⁸⁴ John Carey, *What Good are the Arts?*, Faber and Faber, London, 2005, p.152-168.

⁸⁵ John Carey, *What Good are the Arts?*, Faber and Faber, London, 2005, p.152

⁸⁶ She prescribes participating in communal art-making activities as the chief means by which we could counter the feelings of inadequacy and lack encouraged by modern advertising See: Ellen Dissanayake, *What is Art For?*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1988 and Ellen Dissanayake, *Art and Intimacy: How the Arts Began* University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 2000

⁸⁷ Vázquez describes Marx's interest in art as being driven by a desire to expose the radical contradiction between capitalism and man as a creative being. See Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, *Art and Society: Essays in Marxist Aesthetics*, Merlin Press, London, 1973, p.102. Janet Wolff, also argues that an effective critique of capitalism must be based on the belief that 'a better, more human way of life, consists in free, creative labour'. See: Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, Macmillan, London, 1981, p.15.

skilled and highly paid workers in the 'Third Italy', have proved to be the rarity. In reality, the contemporary rhetoric of 'creativity' and flexibility have tended to be introduced as a means of 'deskilling, disorganising and intensifying labour', and used to justify poor pay and increasing precarisation.⁸⁸ Whilst the advent of digital technology has meant that creative and intellectual labour may be used to direct production or 'perform' labour, it is still rarely integrated with the actual, physical making of objects, in a way that provides a genuinely self-actualising experience for the maker.⁸⁹ Art and craft production that involve 'hand-making', therefore, remains a rare sphere of creative, non-alienated labour that unites the hand and the head – providing a rewarding experience, not inextricably linked to financial rewards. However, modern art institutions tend to discourage adult lay participation, in art, by positioning art as a solely professional activity, and worse, as a something 'divined' rather than made by these special individuals. They also tend to devalue hand-making by articulating a progressive historical narrative of art that positions conceptual, performative and relational art forms as superior.

Since the 'white cube' model has become the standard method of installation, it has become increasingly rare for the production processes of art to be described, or shown, in public art museums. Where it is included, any information of this type is treated as contextual material and either placed in vitrines – separate from the work – or addressed in textual form, in an accompanying booklet. Just as the ability to appreciate art is tacitly represented as the 'divine' gift of the elites, the final art object is consistently presented without reference to the way art works are made – mystifying the art and distancing it from other forms of manufacture. The anti-authorial emphasis on open-ended interpretations, in the name of increased agency for the viewer, (which I described in Chapters One and Two) has also meant that it is increasingly rare to state clearly the artist/maker's intentions in making, displaying or distributing their work in a particular way. This is hegemonic because it sets artistic labour apart from other forms of work, and also because it strips the viewer of their critical agency: it serves to further mystify those objects, making them appear 'divined' or supernatural and, thus, beyond

⁸⁸ Simon Clarke makes this point and characterises the debate in: Simon Clarke, 'New Utopias for Old: Fordist Dreams and Post-Fordist Fantasies', *Capital and Class*, 42, 2001, pp.131–53.

⁸⁹ It is argued that under 'Cognitive Capitalism', creative thinking has been incorporated into more types of labour, but in reality this is rarely more than corporate rhetoric and creative knowledge is turned into a commodity that can be outsourced, exported or imported according to the needs of each particular product.

question. If the viewer does not know what the production processes were, or the maker's rationale for choosing them, how can they question the artist's choices?

For example, Staniszweski has noted how the absence of references to how an artwork was made, at MoMA, conveyed the notion that art was unrelated and naturally superior to other forms of production. Even when MoMA produced a ground-breaking exhibition of industrial art in 1934, entitled *Machine Art*, they reduced the products of industrial art and design to entirely aesthetic considerations, by showing only finished objects that happened to reinforce the universality and indisputable validity of the forms embraced by modern art, in a modernist installation.⁹⁰ By positioning industrial products as aesthetic objects, they neatly circumvented the acknowledgement of the material reality of fine art as something manufactured not divined, for fear of undermining its privileged status. In most other public art institutions, the professional fine arts are still kept completely separate from craft, design, applied art and vernacular art, in order to protect its increasingly tenuous position as a separate ontological category and its rarefied status, in relation to these fields.

The consistent concealment of the making process, in exhibitions of art, is part of a general bracketing off of professional art from other forms of material labour and vernacular cultural production. Since Duchamp's urinal readymade, the 'white cube' has been used as a symbolic signifying space that reinforces a new definition of 'art' as any object declared as such by a professional artist. For the art institution, the distinction is more consciously aimed at ensuring the economic value and social capital of their collections and their work, but it is still important to acknowledge the fact that a definition of art predicated on the professional status of the artist invalidates the creative production of other people and relegates it to the status of 'not art'. This must surely discourage lay people from making and valuing their own art, and, thus, repress the possibility of their self-actualisation through art-making. It also confers the idea that professional artists are special people, with a 'divine gift' that must be set apart

⁹⁰ It must be acknowledged that MoMA was also counter-hegemonic in its unprecedented inclusion of departments and the production of numerous exhibitions relating to commercial and applied art and wider popular culture. The display techniques and installation methods utilised for the display of such works was however often markedly and strangely similar to their displays of modern fine art. The *Machine Art* exhibition of 1934, for example, was organised and selected around the principle of beauty, machine parts were placed on pedestals and industrial products were shown in glass cases. See: Mary Anne Staniszweski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*. MIT Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 153.

from other types of worker, and treated differently. The 'white cube' is repressive as, by marking out art as a protected and unique kind of work, which only 'innately gifted' individuals are able to participate in, art institutions serve to both obscure the possibility of non-alienated work, in any other sphere of production, and to foreclose the idea that anyone other than professional artists should be entitled to creative, non-alienated labour. It is critically important for a counter-hegemonic project to attempt to challenge these myths, because it is essential to strive for the ideal of non-alienated labour, if there is to be a genuinely different alternative to neoliberal capitalism. It followed, therefore, that if we were to offer an authentic counter-hegemonic challenge, through the exhibition, it must acknowledge the possibility of creative, non-alienated labour; that it exists, not only for the professional artist as a special privilege, but for all people. I proposed that we must develop new strategies of installation and interpretation that were formed in exact opposition to the four aesthetic principles that underscore the 'white cube' model. The approach I formulated was comprised of three main strategies: a) To visually display the processes of artistic production on an equal, if not more substantial, footing than the final objects of artistic labour; b) to include artistic work produced by people other than professional artists and; c) to involve visitors in the processes of art making themselves.⁹¹

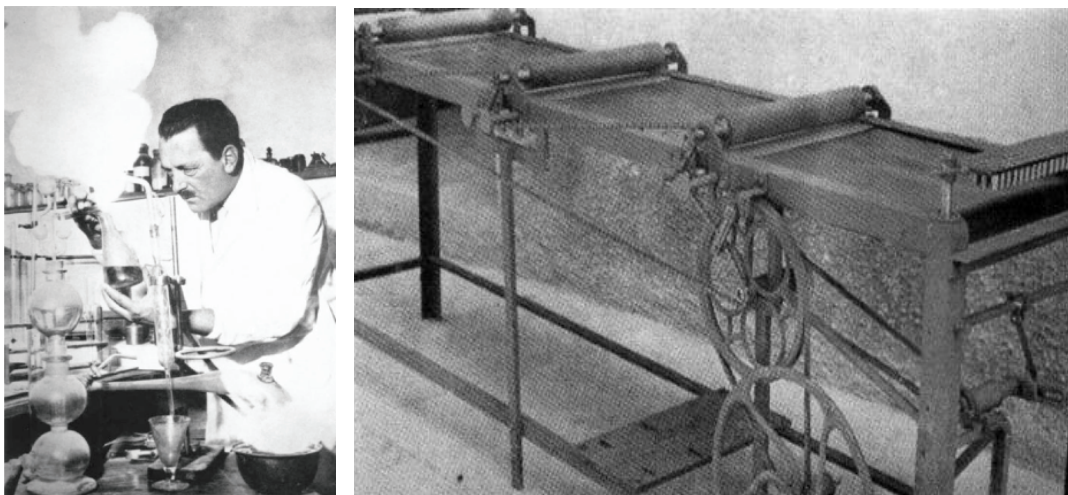


Fig.53. (Left.) *Untitled Photograph showing Pinot Gallizio at work, reproduced in Internationale Situationiste, no.2 Dec 1958* Fig. 54. (Right) *The 'machine' Pinot Gallizio constructed to assemble his paintings. These images are reproduced with the kind permission of Archivio Giuseppe-Pinot Gallizio, Turin, Italy.*

⁹¹ Again it should be noted that when I proposed these ideas I did so in different terms. Although here I make the case for positioning art as a production process in terms of my wider counter-hegemonic objectives, when delivering my proposals to Tate Liverpool I rationalised them in terms of effectively communicating, and not contradicting, the central premise of the exhibition and in relation to their own institutional objectives. I first proposed the broad approach of focussing on art as a production process in my original proposal for the exhibition *What's Left?*, dated 26th May 2010. I proposed the specific examples outlined during curatorial meetings and via email exchanges with the curatorial team at different points from June 2010- August 2013.

One of the key challenges was how to communicate the production processes when, for the most part, they cannot be ascertained from the artworks themselves (by ‘production processes’ I mean every stage of an art objects production, from conceptualisation and making, to displaying, distributing and exchanging the work). Taking Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio as an example, the methods he developed to produce, distribute and exchange the work, could not better exemplify the exhibition concept. Pinot-Gallizio’s over-riding aim, as clearly declared on one of his industrial paintings (fig. 55), was to ‘abolish alienating work’ by creating models for a playful, creative labour that everyone could partake in, as part of a new revolutionary life-praxis.⁹² His objective was to formulate a way of working that would critique the division of labour that forcibly separates art from all other forms of work.⁹³ He developed a collective working practice called ‘industrial painting’ which aped mass production techniques, by producing huge rolls of paintings on a ‘production line’ of printing rollers, presented as automated machines. Introducing elements of play and random chance into the process by using unstable chemicals (sometimes even gunpowder), by working outdoors so that nature played its unpredictable part, and by manually operating the rollers. As such, no two paintings were ever the same.

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions.

Fig. 55. Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio, *Untitled (Abolition du Travail Aliene)*, 1958, Private Collection (on loan to Strasbugo Musee de Arte moderne).

⁹² See: Frances Tracey, ‘Pinot-Gallizio’s Industrial Painting: Towards a Surplus of Life’, *Oxford Art Journal*, 28.3, 2005. Guy Debord actually painted this slogan on a small piece of one of Pinot-Gallizio’s industrial paintings as part of the exhibition *Destruction of RSG-6*, which opened on June 22, 1963, at the Exi Gallery in Odense, Denmark.

⁹³ As a trained Chemist Pinot-Gallizio was particularly opposed to the divisions between art, science and everyday life.

Pinot-Gallizio's production and distribution methods were clearly developed in accordance with leftist theory, and were strategically aimed at transforming the poverty of social experience in capitalist society.⁹⁴ However, if the viewer were presented with the final art object alone – an industrial painting – it would be completely unrealistic to expect them to be able to identify how the work was made and sold, and, thus, how the work had any relationship with leftist politics.

This example was used to argue that it was essential that we both communicated the political intentions of the maker, and made visually evident the processes of planning, making, displaying and distributing the work. Indeed, I proposed that we show materials that demonstrate the 'processes' of artistic production on an equal, if not more substantial footing, than the final art objects. In the case of 'Industrial Painting', this could have been achieved through the display of archival material alone, as Pinot Gallizio recorded each stage through photographs, films, diaries, sketches and illustrated journal articles.⁹⁵ However, the curatorial team were justifiably concerned that using too many documentary materials would result in a fragmentary and 'bitty' display. It was, therefore, necessary to formulate alternative creative approaches to making the processes visible, which did not rely so heavily on archival objects. Past exhibitions that had attempted to make production processes visible provided inspiration for these approaches.

Finding examples of recent exhibitions that have focussed on, or attempted to make visible, the production processes of art, proved challenging (again highlighting the paucity of innovative and creative approaches to installation in public art institutions). Even the conceptually innovative exhibition *Work Ethic* (Baltimore Museum of Art, 2003) – that focussed on art as a form of labour – used conventional 'white cube' modes of presentation, and was almost wholly comprised of final art objects. However, research into possible works for the exhibition uncovered a less contemporary, but nonetheless highly relevant source – a contentious, politically charged exhibition

⁹⁴ He was specifically influenced by the Marxist concepts of alienation, reification and commodity fetishism and the Situationist theory of 'Unitary Urbanism'.

⁹⁵ These materials are preserved in the Pinot-Gallizio archive (Archivio Gallizio) in Turin: http://www.pinotgallizio.org/index.php?a=autentiche_en (Accessed 21.04.12)

entitled *William Morris Today*, held at the unlikely venue of the ICA, in 1984.⁹⁶ This exhibition not only focussed on the politics of Morris's art production, but also set out to challenge the standard modes of display in public art institutions such as Tate.⁹⁷

Curator Teresa Newman made clear, in her retrospective analysis of *William Morris Today*, that the curatorial team (herself, Ian Tod and Ray Watkinson) had a direct political agenda. They aimed to 'inform, provoke and evoke' by reconnecting Morris's making processes to his political ideology, and, thus, offer a radical alternative vision of society that could instigate a 're-appraisal of socialism's goals and strategies'.⁹⁸ They recognised that it could not be 'an exhibition about artefacts – 'however beautiful in themselves, or potent in their associations' – as Morris's final art objects outwardly revealed nothing of his political intent.⁹⁹ Instead, they focussed on attempting to draw out the political thought and values behind Morris's practice, by commissioning original work by photographers, artists and craftsmen and by developing their own creative visual solutions, as curators. So, for example, in order to articulate Morris's ideas about non-alienated production, they commissioned Steve White to produce a series of photographs, showing the processes used to produce hand-printed Morris wallpapers, by workers, at the Sanderson Perivale factory.¹⁰⁰ Whilst elsewhere, they produced a film adaptation of *News From Nowhere* – compiled from a series of animated photomontage images that transported the viewer along the Thames in 2136 AD.¹⁰¹

Unsurprisingly, art critics, in the mainstream press, received the emphasis on ideas, processes and context, over final art objects, negatively. These critics focussed on the

⁹⁶ The exhibition was held at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 1 March - 29 April 1984. I originally looked at the exhibition catalogue as part of my research for the William Morris section, but it came to serve as an inspiration for the wider exhibition.

⁹⁷ Teresa Newman's discussion is a rare example of a detailed analysis of the processes of conceptualising and producing the exhibition. In her analysis Newman makes clear that the exhibition was conceived of as a counter-hegemonic challenge to the 'establishment's ideology of art' and in particular as a response to those questions of cultural hierarchy and legitimacy that had troubled herself and Sandy Nairne (co-curator of the exhibition) whilst they worked at Tate: "Why, for instance did the Tate's hierarchy of media exclude those 'lesser' arts from the collection? Who decided, and on what criteria, which works should be available for posterity? Why in displays, did chronology with its narrow emphasis on developments in style and iconography take precedence over all other modes, and by the same token, why was art invariably separated from its social context? All familiar questions that are as relevant today, as they were in the 1980s. Teresa Newman, 'Propaganda and Wallpaper: Reflections on William Morris Today', *Journal of the William Morris Society*, 6.1, Summer 1984, pp.10-16. Available online at: <http://www.morrisociety.org/publications/JWMS/SU84.6.1.Newman.pdf> (accessed 10.02.2011).

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ They interviewed former block printer Ron Stoner. They also commissioned White to photograph four people engaged in very different forms of work which were displayed accompanied by short statements about their experience of the processes of labour to get people thinking about the politics of their own work. See the exhibition catalogue for these and further images: Teresa Newman, *William Morris Today*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 1984.

¹⁰¹ See Gavin Stamp's description of the exhibits at: <http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/31st-march-1984/34/arts>

'audacity' and 'irrelevance' of engaging with Socialist politics, and the apparent didacticism of the exhibition.¹⁰² This contrasted heavily with the reviews of the conventional survey of Pre-Raphaelite work held at the same time at Tate, heralded by one critic as, 'the exhibition of the decade'.¹⁰³ For Newman, the inability of critics to recognise that, for Morris, the labour process was the 'art work', or to accept that prints, wallpapers, books and fabrics were 'final art objects', was a result of the entrenched hierarchies of the institutional art world, where 'flouting accepted conventions-formal and ideological' was unacceptable, 'within an establishment context'.¹⁰⁴

However, the exhibition was very well attended by young people, in particular, and was highly regarded by scholars considering the exhibition from a pedagogical perspective. Anthony Dyson, reviewing the exhibition for the *Journal of Art and Design Education*, for example, applauded the innovative integration of contextual material and the focus on the humanising value of craftsmanship; asking 'has there ever been a better manifesto for art education?'¹⁰⁵ As the curators similarly intended the exhibition to be primary educative and to go against the grain of the institutional art world, the response of audiences and teachers was a more useful indication of the relative merits of their curatorial approaches than the opinions of establishment critics for this research project. This exhibition, thus, provided useful ideas for a display that would demonstrate Morris's concept of disalienating production through the revival of craft skills and processes, and also strengthened my case for developing more creative means of visualising labour processes, throughout the exhibition.

¹⁰² It is particularly interesting to examine the critical responses charted by Newman, as they bore an uncanny resemblance to those in the final produced exhibition, *Art Turning Left* at Tate Liverpool. Newman gives the following summary: "Roger Scruton of The Times found 'insulting and half-baked criticism' and 'semi-literate abuse' on the walls. Careless of the implied critique of all modern 'politics' he tried to score points by citing the abysmal pollution record of industry in Eastern Europe. So too, in a vintage edition of Radio 4's Critics' Forum, Brian Magee denounced Morris as 'a socialist of the most naive and unreconstructed kind, with 'nothing at all to say to us today'; while the liberal Guardian's Waldemar Januszczak dismissed Morris as 'a Pre-Raphaelite dreamer, preaching a brand of escapist fantasy'. Teresa Newman, 'Propaganda and Wallpaper: Reflections on William Morris Today', *Journal of the William Morris Society*, 6.1, Summer 1984, pp.10-16. Available online at: <http://www.morrisociety.org/publications/JWMS/SU84.6.1.Newman.pdf> (accessed 10.02.2011).

¹⁰³ Anthony Thwaite in Critics' Forum quoted in Teresa Newman, 'Propaganda and Wallpaper: Reflections on William Morris Today', *Journal of the William Morris Society*, 6.1, Summer 1984, p.16. Available online at: <http://www.morrisociety.org/publications/JWMS/SU84.6.1.Newman.pdf> (accessed 10.02.2011).

¹⁰⁴ Teresa Newman, 'Propaganda and Wallpaper: Reflections on William Morris Today', *Journal of the William Morris Society*, 6.1, Summer 1984, p.11. Available online at: <http://www.morrisociety.org/publications/JWMS/SU84.6.1.Newman.pdf> (accessed 10.02.2011).

¹⁰⁵ He also stated that a teacher, 'will find here the very embodiment of the fact that art is never created in a vacuum: he will seldom come across a more effective opportunity of conveniently demonstrating this to his students'. See: Anthony Dyson, Exhibition Review: 'William Morris Today', ICA London, 1984, *Journal of Art & Design Education*, Volume 3, Issue 2, pages 247–251, June 1984.

Primary research, involving the direct observation of visitors in several relevant exhibitions and collection displays, provided further evidence that visualising the production processes would make for engaging displays. I visited the permanent display of Barbara Hepworth's working models and methods at the Hepworth Wakefield, and the temporary exhibitions *The Power of Making* at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and *Pick Me Up*, Somerset House.¹⁰⁶ All of these displays concentrated on the working processes of artists, rather than their final works.¹⁰⁷ The Hepworth Wakefield used a traditional installation of working models, sketches, tools and equipment (taken from her studio), and archival photographs to demonstrate Hepworth's working process, and to highlight the importance of craftsmanship to her practice. *The Power of Making* featured footage of the maker producing their work, and describing the centrality of making to their life.¹⁰⁸ *Pick Me Up*, on the other hand, focussed on 'live making', transferring paper-artist Rob Ryan's studio directly to the exhibition space. Ryan, and his assistants, produced paper cuts and print works, in situ, for the whole duration of the show-involving visitors in the processes. These displays actively transformed the way in which the visitors looked, and related to, the final works on display. They tended to spend much longer with each work, and were visibly more engaged in thinking and conversing with others about the works, than in the other displays within the institution.

The level of critical engagement was, however, significantly higher in *The Power of Making* and *Pick Me Up*, where visitors could be observed questioning the reasons why certain processes were used, and relating the processes to their own experiences of making. I thus proposed that it would be essential to display archival material used in *What's Left?* it directly on the walls, as equally worthy of the viewer's attention as the

¹⁰⁶ The display of Barbara Hepworth's working models (The Hepworth Family Gift), tools, sketches, diagrams of production and videos is on permanent exhibition at the Hepworth Wakefield. A video of the display can be seen here: <http://www.hepworthwakefield.org/collection/the-hepworth-family-gift/> (accessed 10.01.2012). The Power of Making was a V&A and Crafts Council exhibition, curated by Daniel Charny, on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington from 6 September 2011 - 2 January 2012.

¹⁰⁷ It must be noted that, in contrast to William Morris Today, the Hepworth display only constituted a very small section of the museum, and that the other two exhibitions were framed around craft and design practices, where the importance of production processes are, perhaps, more readily accepted than in the institutional fine art world.

¹⁰⁸ Curator Daniel Charny described the importance of making in the wall panels of the exhibition: 'Making is the most powerful way that we solve problems, express ideas and shape our world. What and how we make defines who we are, and communicates who we want to be. For many people, making is critical for survival. For others, it is a chosen vocation: a way of thinking, inventing and innovating. And for some it is simply a delight to be able to shape a material and say 'I made that'. The power of making is that it fulfils each of these human needs and desires. Those whose craft and ingenuity reach the very highest levels can create amazing things. But making is something everyone can do. The knowledge of how to make – both everyday objects and highly-skilled creations – is one of humanity's most precious resources'. Daniel Charny (Ed.), *The Power of Making: The Importance of Being Skilled*, V&A publishing, London, 2011.

final artwork. It was also important, though, to temper traditional installations of archival material with more creative, engaging and interactive approaches, including the commissioning of new material, enlarged photographs or wall vinyls showing working drawings, or, for example, a creative arrangement of videos showing the elements of the production process, sequentially.

The photographs originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. Fig 56 was sourced at <https://greatacre.wordpress.com/tag/sculpture/page/14/> Fig. 57 was sourced at http://kayleighpeett.blogspot.co.uk/2011_01_01_archive.html

Fig. 56. (Left) Display of Barbara Hepworth's working models, with tools and equipment, photographs and videos of her working process, at Hepworth Wakefield. Fig. 57. (Right) Rob Ryan's studio decamped at *Pick Me Up*, 2010.

Inspired by Rob Ryan's decamped studio at *Pick Me Up*, I also proposed that we should feature 'live-making' in the gallery space, where visitors could watch the processes of production unfold in real time. Taking this approach would enable us to develop creative solutions to the display of works that we are unable to physically show, due to either budgetary, spatial or availability issues. The work of the Mexican Muralists, for example – though clearly an integral and crucial part of the story that the exhibition is trying to tell – presented a significant curatorial challenge.¹⁰⁹ Firstly, the murals were made and fixed on site, and, therefore, could not be physically transported. And, secondly, taking murals out of their original context to display them in a museum would undermine their specific development as a more democratic, anti-elitist art form. However, as the primary focus of the exhibition is the production process, the story of how leftist values influenced the production of these works could *and should* still be visually communicated by other means.

¹⁰⁹ At one stage I looked into the possibility of showing Diego Rivera's 'portable murals' that MoMA, New York exhibited in 2011-12, in the exhibition *Diego Rivera: Murals for The Museum of Modern Art*. However, MoMA were only able to show these murals, as they were part of their own collection. Although they were originally called 'portable murals' they are not portable in the sense of being able to loan them for an exhibition on another continent, as they are too fragile, too heavy, and too valuable to ship. *Diego Rivera: Murals for The Museum of Modern Art*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, November 13, 2011–May 14, 2012. The exhibition microsite can still be accessed online at <http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2011/rivera/intro.php> (accessed 01/02/2012).

The Mexican Electricians' Syndicate mural in Mexico City was a particularly relevant work, as the Communist David Alfaro Siqueiros attempted to apply Marxist principles directly to the processes of every stage of a mural's production. It was initiated by Siqueiros as a kind of counter-proposal to Leon Trotsky, Andre Breton and Diego Rivera's manifesto, *Towards a Free and Revolutionary Art*.¹¹⁰ Siqueiros aimed to create a more direct connection between the collective production and collective reception of an artwork – aiming for absolute political and aesthetic unity.¹¹¹ The search for political unity involved working as a collective according to Communist ideals, and adopting a self-reflective, dialogical and democratic approach to decision-making. Aesthetic unity was achieved through a variety of methods and technical developments that would change the way that murals were made forever. This included the use of techniques such as airbrushing and projecting photomontages onto the walls, in order to eliminate the hand of individual authorship and create a uniform style.

I proposed a three-pronged approach. Firstly, that we show digital projections of the completed mural in the exhibition itself and on the exterior of one of the union buildings in Liverpool. Secondly, that we document the mural's production through the original sketches and photomontages that were produced by Josep Renau to work out the optimal positions for collective reception. And, finally, that Liverpool-based artist David Jacques, who had both experience of producing murals in union buildings and a specific interest in Mexican Muralism, could be commissioned to produce a work, in situ, that unfolded the narrative of the Mexican Electricians' Syndicate mural, or related a wider history of collective mural production.¹¹²

The emphasis of the proposed interpretation strategy was, thus, on creative visual communication. One key idea was the commissioning of a series of narrative illustrations that depicted the process of producing specific art works. These would be

¹¹⁰ It was produced by the temporary collective 'The International Team of Plastic Artists', which included Josep Renau and Luis Arenal.

¹¹¹ See: Jennifer Jolly, 'Art of the Collective: David Alfaro Siqueiros, Josep Renau and their collaboration at the Mexican Electricians' Syndicate', *Oxford Art Journal* 31.1 2008, pp.129-151.

¹¹² I suggested that David Jacques, as a Liverpool based artist, would be one ideal candidate to undertake this commission, due to his interest and experience in mural production and his research into different forms of left-wing politics such as Anarcho-Syndicalism. The Bogside Artists, a collective of muralists from Derry, Northern Ireland, who produced the 'People's Gallery' murals in Bogside, would also be another interesting group to work with due to their interest in international collectivism and because they demonstrate the continued relevance of mural production to leftist politics.

enlarged as vinyls and displayed on the wall alongside the relevant work. Another proposed idea was to invite living artists, such as Julio Parc (a former member of GRAV), or the surviving members of Equipo 57 to directly articulate how they have impacted upon their production and distribution strategies, in a series of film interviews.¹¹³ The reasoning behind this emphasis on visual communication, was to both afford the curatorial and learning team more opportunities for creative thinking and production as part of the role, and to bring different forms of creativity into the exhibition space. The hegemonic idea that the curator should not impinge on the autonomy of the artwork by developing their own creative visual solutions to the installation or interpretation of art, after all, runs contrary to one of the principles that forms the basis of this exhibition concept: that all people should be afforded the opportunity to participate in forms of labour that involve the creative expression of their humanity. It is extremely rare for other forms of creative visual communication to be employed in public art institutions, for, as I have argued, art must be presented by such institutions as inherently distinct from these 'lesser' forms of making, in order to protect its unique status as 'non alienated' work. Narrative illustrations would, therefore, not only provides a means of focussing the viewers' attention on the making process, but would also serve as a means of breaking up the sanctity of the white cube, and subverting false hierarchies between different types of creative labour.

Re-positioning amateur art production

We're not seeking a low level of culture for everyone but rather an elevated culture that is accessible to all ... Culture should serve to supersede the division of labour into intellectual work and manual labour...Culture should be democratised... so our people are not only the consumers, which is also important, but the producers of culture.¹¹⁴ **Ernesto Cardenal, Minister of Culture, Nicaragua**

Art, in exhibitions at public institutions, has come to be defined, since Duchamp, as anything produced by a professional artist, that they chose to define as art. The mission statements of National public art institutions do not they state that only professional

¹¹³These interviews could also be transcribed in the exhibition publication and would therefore serve as an important scholarly resource.

¹¹⁴ Ernesto Cardenal (and Rosario Murillo), A New Culture in Philip Zwerling and Connie Martin (eds), *Nicaragua, A New Kind of Revolution*, Westport, Connecticut, 1985 p.43.

artists must produce the art that they collect, or show. However, the fact that people other than professional artists also produce art, is rarely acknowledged, let alone displayed. Even inclusion in so-called participatory projects is dictated by professional artists, attributed and presented as *their* work. Though exhibitions of amateur art production have been hosted in major art institutions in Britain, this work has, since the 1970s, been almost exclusively represented as ‘outsider art’. Even then, it is exhibited on its own, with a cordon sanitaire erected around it – so as to present professional and amateur work as completely separate forms of meaning production, with the associated hierarchies kept firmly in place.¹¹⁵ The inclusion of non-professional art in thematic, survey or group exhibitions (or, indeed, in any other context than the traditional ‘outsider’ show) is almost unheard of.

The exclusion of non-professional art from official representations of culture is hegemonic, as it only affords the right to ‘be creative’ to an institutionally sanctioned few, according to criteria that is always dictated by an elite class, from above. The ubiquity of the ‘white cube’ has ensured that artists are consistently represented as superior and uniquely gifted individuals that are naturally entitled to an exclusive privilege – the right to participate in non-alienated labour. Thus, whilst the division of labour continues to reduce the potential for creative production as part of people’s working lives, art institutions discourage the production of art as leisure, by excluding amateur work from what is recognised as art. The exposition of professional artists work, as the *only* socially valuable art worthy of being recognised as part of a nation’s cultural production, must surely have a negative impact on other people’s ability to imagine themselves as the creative and productive beings that, Marxists argue, is an essential basis for human happiness. As Marx argues, alienating people from their human need to be creative, dampens their intellectual agency and, thus, their class and social consciousness.¹¹⁶ Hence, art institutions are part of a hegemonic process, which alienates people from the production of their own culture and diminishes their political agency.

¹¹⁵ Exhibitions of ‘folk art’ or ‘naïve art’ are common elsewhere, and in the USA in particular, but not in Britain. Since, I wrote this chapter and developed my exhibition concept there has been a notable and unprecedented exhibition of British Folk Art at Tate Britain. *British Folk Art*, Tate Britain, (10 June – 31 August 2014) and Compton Verney (27 September 2014 to 14 December 2014). For details see: <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/british-folk-art> (accessed 30.08.2014).

¹¹⁶ See: Isaak Illich Rubin, *Essays on Marx’s Theory of Value*, Black Rose Books, 1975.

The exclusion of amateur art production from art institutions, out with specific 'outsider art' exhibitions, thus, serves the interests of the elite, capitalist class in two key ways. Firstly, it ameliorates calls for non-alienated working conditions, by indoctrinating people into accepting that this is the exclusive right of professional artists because they are inherently superior and uniquely gifted people. And secondly, by repressing lay people's creative production in their leisure time, by undermining its validity as art, which stifles the transformative thinking that leads people to first imagine and then demand social change. As a challenge to the status quo is exactly what a counter-hegemonic curatorial practice requires, I argued that we must use an expanded definition of art to define our selection of work. It was imperative that this exhibition, not only clearly presented the art within it as something akin to other types of labour, but also showed the potential for meaningful creative production outside of the role of 'professional artist'. To be completely clear, although this included showing works where professional artists have sought to develop methods of socialising art production or non-alienated means of living and working, it also meant exhibiting the art of lay practitioners as *art*, and on an equal footing to that of professionals.

The inclusion of non-professional art at Tate is, however, far from straightforward. As Andrew Brighton has argued, the coherence of the official orthodoxy of art established by institutions, such as Tate, sees art as something superior to, and transcendent of, other aspects of social life. It is, thus, contingent on the systematic exclusion of certain types of art, such as the art of non-professionals and in particular 'working class painters of working life'.¹¹⁷ It was, therefore, important to demonstrate that including amateur production in the exhibition was essential to communicate the influence of leftist values on the production of art. I argued that showing amateur art production was an essential part of the narrative that the exhibition was attempting to relate. For the left, thinking about the ways art objects are made and produced is more than just a question of the production process itself. It also concerns the social relations of production – who is enabled and encouraged to produce art – and the politics of representation – whose art production is deemed culturally meaningful. The various movements of the left have been as much concerned with who has access to

¹¹⁷ Andrew Brighton, 'Introduction' in Andrew Brighton and Lynda Morris (eds.), *Towards Another Picture: Anthology Of Writings By Artists Working In Britain*, Midland Group, Nottingham, 1977, p. 5.

participating in the production of art and culture, and, thus, in the productions of meanings, as with the content and form of artworks: the 'who' is just as important as the 'what'. We could not show just any amateur work to communicate this: what we showed had to have been conceived as part of a strategic leftist movement to socialise the means of production or democratise the production of art.

The groups that were proposed for possible inclusion included British grassroots groups, such as the Ashington Group of Unprofessional Painters, the community art associations that developed in the late 1960s and 1970s, and the various art collectives that form part of the contemporary DiY movement. It also included the various cultural initiatives that emerged in the 1930s as part of the Left's attempt to establish a popular front through the international workers' movements – such as the Workers' Photography Movement. It further comprised the initiatives developed by leftist revolutionary states to democratise cultural production more systematically, such as the Movimiento de Aficionados (Movement of Amateurs) in Cuba, the factory-based amateur film clubs in Poland, and the Huxian Peasant Painters in China. Including any of these movements or groups in the exhibition would, of course, present their own unique curatorial challenges. However, examining the wider ways in which other curators have framed amateur art production, in major public art museums, can point to the possible pitfalls and tensions that may emerge.

Notwithstanding a period in the 1970s when there was a resurgence of interest in amateur art production amongst the so-called 'crisis critics', the inclusion of amateur art in exhibitions, which also include professional artists, in Britain is incredibly rare. However, thanks almost exclusively to the collection of Monika Kinley and her enthusiasm for making it public, there has been a significant number of exhibitions of solely amateur art work, since the formative exhibition *Outsiders* at the Hayward Gallery in 1979.¹¹⁸ Indeed, the public appetite for seeing *outsider art* production – arguably a symptom of dissatisfaction with the homogeneity of professional contemporary art practice presented in public art institutions – is evidenced by the considerable popularity of the *Museum of Everything*, which was developed as an

¹¹⁸It was co-curated by British art critic Roger Cardinal and British poet, art dealer and curator Victor Musgrave.

‘outsider’ counter exhibition to the Frieze Art Fair.¹¹⁹ Even Tate Britain hosted an exhibition of ‘outsider art’ in 2006, imaginatively entitled, *Outsider Art*. Such exhibitions, may, technically, bring amateur art production inside the institutional art world.¹²⁰ However, the framing of the work as ‘outside of art’ serves to reinforce the separateness of amateur and professional work and, thus, bolster pre-existing hierarchical assumptions.

For the institution, ‘outsider art’ exhibitions are acceptable *because* they keep the spheres of professional and unprofessional production separate and, thus, help to protect the distinct ontological category of ‘fine art’ and the status of the art objects that they hold in their collections. However, the term ‘outsider art’, problematically bundles together the work of individuals who deliberately maintain their amateur status as a means of subverting the neoliberal sovereignty of the markets, with the work of children, prisoners, psychiatric patients and ‘other eccentric individuals’.¹²¹ This serves to equate all amateur art production with an inability to exercise sound critical and moral judgement. The titles of such displays are emblematic of this tendency. *Intuition: The Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection arrives at the Whitworth*, for example, frames the conceptual process involved in producing such work as intuitive thinking – the antithesis of critical reasoning. The other potential titles for this exhibition, such as ‘Raw Creation’, ‘Art without Tradition’ and ‘The Raw and the Pure’, similarly reveal this propensity to represent non-professional art as pure and untouched by the civilising influences of measured, critical reasoning and emotional distance.¹²² Whilst exhibitions of ‘folk art’ tend to use the ideas of artistic ‘innovation’ and ‘aesthetic quality’ to reinforce the distinction between professional and amateur production, ‘outsider art’ exhibitions create the impression that what separates these forms of production is the artist’s ability to exercise control over their mind and to think with critical distance about what they have produced. Put simply, amateur art

¹¹⁹ The Museum of Everything was originally developed as a counter-exhibition to the Frieze Art Fair in order to showcase the work of untrained and non-professional artists. See their website: <http://musevery.com/#about> (accessed 03/03/2013).

¹²⁰ Outsider Art, Tate Britain, 13 September 2005 – 2 January 2006. See: <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/outsider-art/> (accessed 06/03/2013).

¹²¹ Many amateur art-making communities (such as the DiY art movement) also deliberately maintain this separation and willing assume the status of the ‘outsider’ as a political stance. Their purpose is to subvert capitalist modes of distribution and exchange and thus the commoditisation of their work.

¹²² Information gleaned from Marina Cashdan’s article for the Huffington Post. See: Marina Cashdan, ‘Outsider Art: Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection at Whitworth Gallery, Manchester’, *Huffington Post*, June 29th, 2010. Available online at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marina-cashdan/outsider-art-musgrave-kin_b_627737.html (accessed 01.09.2012).

production is represented as the result of an emotional impulse, if not hysteria or madness.

Even in the most well-meaning exhibitions, amateur art production is romantically conceptualised as uninformed, uncritical and pure of the corrupting influences of either intellect or knowledge. *Inner Worlds, Outside* (Whitechapel Gallery, London, April 28 to June 25, 2006 and Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, July 25 – October 15, 2006), for example, despite being one of the very few exhibitions in recent years to juxtapose professional and non-professional work, implied that only the professionals had the appropriate distance from their emotional impulses to reflect critically on their work. The reviews of the exhibition indicated that curator, Jon Thompson, achieved his aim of demonstrating that aesthetic quality and skill can be found in amateur work.¹²³

However, because the exhibition was organised around the binary oppositions between 'inside' and 'outside', 'amateur' and 'professional', it invited new distinctions to be drawn – and these reveal themselves in both the critics' reactions and the texts that accompanied the exhibition.¹²⁴ In a single paragraph in the introductory text, for example, the organisers claim to want to 'explode many of the myths surrounding 'outsiders', but, ironically, reveal that 'the title is taken from a phrase by poet Rainer Maria Rilke, who championed intuition over the rational'. This framing of the exhibition around 'intuitive thinking' and 'inner worlds' unsurprisingly presented the art of the 'outsider' artists as the product of raw, emotional, self-expression. Whereas, the professional artists work was always rationalised in the accompanying texts, as having been the result of the artist self-consciously and deliberately co-opting these 'primitive' aesthetics and 'anti-rational' methodologies, in relation to philosophical ideas.¹²⁵

Moreover, despite recognising the problematic nature of the concept of 'outsider art'

¹²³ See for example, Adrian Searle's review of the exhibition for *The Guardian*, where he states: 'Skill here is not an issue. Bill Traylor, born a slave in Alabama in 1854, only began to draw and paint in his 70s, using scraps of paper and card. He never thought of himself as an artist, yet his marvellously lively animals, people and "exciting events" have a great graphic touch, an innate skilfulness, and sense of shape and placement'. Adrian Searle, 'Meet the Misfits', *The Guardian*, May 4th, 2006.

<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2006/may/04/1> (accessed 01.09.2012).

¹²⁴ Adrian Searle in the same article reports: 'What's lacking in Darger's work is much sense of development or self-reflection, whereas Kubin, many of whose images are not much less alarming, was a fully paid-up member of the European avant-garde... Making visible does not, in itself, make anyone an artist... Many here could never survive as artists, not now or at any other time. Nor was that how they saw themselves'. Adrian Searle, 'Meet the Misfits', *The Guardian*, May 4th, 2006.

<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2006/may/04/1> (accessed 01.09.2012).

¹²⁵ Curator Jon Thompson reinforced this view in his catalogue essay when he states: 'While both processes (condensation and simplification) are clearly present in the work of many Outsider Artists, they are rarely if ever deployed strategically or for stylistic reasons, but are driven by a desire to register an emotional state in its most intense visual form'. Surely, even if this desire to register an emotional state characterises the work, this could be understood as a strategy in itself. Jon Thompson, 'The Mad, The Brut, The Primitive and the Modern: A Discursive History', in *Inner Worlds Outside*, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 2006, p.63

the exhibition still brought together the work of people from the ‘fringes of society’ – ‘who typically included psychiatric patients, criminal offenders, self-taught visionaries and mediums’ – under this rubric.¹²⁶ By failing to make any distinctions between self-taught artists or hobbyists and the forcibly institutionalised, they, therefore, managed to reinforce, rather than ‘explode’, the myth that there is something necessarily deviant about amateur art-making.¹²⁷ This must surely discourage people from pursuing artistic practice and, hence, serves to alienate people from their creative selves.

I, therefore, argued that what we must strive to curate a selection of amateur art production that demonstrates the role of critical reflection, and discussion, in its formation and evaluation. Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska’s *Enthusiasm* (1 April to 22 May 2005), held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery just one year before, provided an example of an approach of displaying amateur art production that we *could* adapt for *What’s Left?*¹²⁸ *Enthusiasm*’s main strength was that it focused on the factory-based amateur film clubs, instigated by the Communist State in post-war Poland, as part of a wider, organised, amateur art movement. The overt and distinct ideological imperatives behind the founding of these clubs allowed them to effectively counter the distorted picture of amateur art painted by ‘outsider’ and ‘folk art’ exhibitions.



Figs. 58 and 59. Stills from *Narodziny Filmu* by J Müller, shown as part of *Enthusiasm*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, April-May 2005. Reproduced under Creative Commons Licence

¹²⁶ *Inner Worlds Outside*, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 2006 (cover flap).

¹²⁷ Seen in this light the exhibition may have more in common with *Entartete Kunst* (*Degenerate Art*) than the curators have recognised. They note that this exhibition is a precedent as, in its attempt to discredit the work of avant-garde professional artists by showing the work of psychiatric patients alongside it, it was ‘ironically – and for ethically dubious reasons... the first example of curatorial practice to associate mainstream and Outsider Art’. But is conflating the work of any given self-taught amateur artist with psychiatric patients and the criminally interned any less ideologically motivated or ‘ethically dubious’? I don’t think so. See: Jon Thompson, ‘Inner Worlds Outside: An Introduction’, in *Inner Worlds Outside*, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 2006, p.11.

¹²⁸ *Enthusiasm* was co-organised with Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, Kunst-Werke, Berlin and the Centre for Contemporary Art, Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw.

As Polish sociologist Wiesław Stradomski has explained, the explicit purpose of the clubs was to counter the alienation faced by workers in the factories, by providing the free space, equipment and materials for creative production in their leisure time.¹²⁹ By democratising the means of cultural production and dissemination, the movement aimed to strengthen the popular front by creating a collective form of representation, where workers could represent themselves and others, to each other. Gerhard Henninger explains the role of the clubs, competitions and magazines that formed the presentational and discursive spaces of amateur worker photography and film. He explains:

The less the amateur takes photographs just for himself, the more he takes photographs to communicate his thoughts, feelings and opinions, his experiences and perceptions, the more he lets others participate in them and generates similar thoughts and sensations. The stronger and faster that his creations grow out of the private and individual sphere, the stronger and faster his artistic effort and lay-artistic practice will become socially effective.¹³⁰

As Henninger elucidates, the movement was intended to harness the creativity and self-expression of the individual, but to also transform it into a collective, social, communicative, critical and reflexive experience. Conceived as a means of transforming arts social function, part of this process involved developing the capacity for critical reflection, through collective discussion and critique. As opposed to the isolated, introspective and intuitive art depicted in 'outsider art exhibitions', films such as *Narodziny Filmu* (figs. 58 and 59) showed the workers engaging in critical discourse within the clubroom, and working together to produce shots for the film outdoors.¹³¹

¹²⁹ W. Stradomski, cited in David Crowley, 'Socialist recreation? Amateur film and photography in the People's Republic of Poland and East Germany', *Factografia.com*, September 15, 2011. Available online only: http://faktografia.com/2011/09/15/socialist-recreation-amateur-film-and-photography-in-the-peoples-republic-of-poland-and-east-germany/#_edn4 (accessed 21.09.2014).

¹³⁰ Gerhard Henninger, 'Weg und Ziel der Amateurfotografie in Der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik', in: *Fotografie* 8, 1960, p.292, cited in David Crowley, 'Socialist recreation? Amateur film and photography in the People's Republic of Poland and East Germany', *Factografia.com*, September 15, 2011. Available online only: http://faktografia.com/2011/09/15/socialist-recreation-amateur-film-and-photography-in-the-peoples-republic-of-poland-and-east-germany/#_edn4 (accessed 21.09.2014).

¹³¹ These films are available to view and download for free online at: https://archive.org/details/enthusiastsarchive_NarodzinyFilmu (accessed 30/09/2014).

The photographs originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The photographs were sourced from <http://www.fundaciotapies.org/site/spip.php?article3348>

Figs. 60 and 61. Club House and Cinema Environments, part of the edition of Enthusiasm held at Tàpies Foundation, Barcelona, January 2006.

Displaying such work allowed Cummings and Lewandowska to bring the political, intellectual and discursive aspects of amateur art production to the fore. The opening room, which featured a series of official newsreels, demonstrated that amateur production provided a space of tactical resistance, political critique and creativity that is not always possible within official professional culture. Their reconstruction of an amateur film club featured a selection of amateur films that documented the processes of producing the films, the club meetings and amateur film festivals that they participated in.¹³² Although reconstructed environments are not always helpful, in this exhibition they created a powerful image of the clubs as spaces for collective production and critical reflection. The curatorial approach, thus, reinforced the fact that the films were collectively created, discussed and critiqued.

Enthusiasm, however, highlighted a grey area in the curation of amateur art production: the issue of attributing authorship. Despite renouncing artistic practice ‘where film material is habitually stripped of its context and appropriated as the artists’ property’, Cummings and Lewandowska claim *Enthusiasm* as their work of art.¹³³ Declaring themselves as *the* creative producers of the project seems deeply

¹³² For a detailed description of all the rooms in the exhibition see: Neil Cummings, and Marysia Lewandowska, ‘From Capital to Enthusiasm: An Exhibitionary Practice in Sharon Macdonald and Paul Basu (eds.), *Exhibition Experiments*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2007 p.144-146.

¹³³ Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska are credited as the artists of the project and the exhibition is presented as an exhibition of their artwork (Cummings and Lewandowska – *Enthusiasm*). See the exhibition statement on the Whitechapel website for example: <http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/passports-great-early-buys-from-the-british-council-collection/cummings-and-lewandowska-enthusiasm> (accessed 14/10/14). It is even described by Cummings as a solo show: ‘Enthusiasm’ was a major solo exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery’. See: <http://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/1004/> (accessed 14/10/14). This does not seem to be a decision the pair was entirely comfortable with, as they also took steps to decentre their curatorial authorship. So, for example, the inclusion of an archive of all of the found films was intended to ‘enable visitors to curate their own programs and recognise that our selection – Love, Longing and Labour – was part of an interpretive process and not final or in any way authorial’. See: Neil Cummings, and Marysia Lewandowska, ‘From Capital to Enthusiasm: An Exhibitionary Practice in Sharon Macdonald and Paul Basu (eds.), *Exhibition Experiments*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2007, p.148.

contradictory, particularly in an exhibition that claims to be 'sensitive to the makers'.¹³⁴ However, claiming the project as their artwork may have been absolutely necessary to get amateur art shown in a British art institution, such is the prejudice against non-professional production.¹³⁵ It appears that in British art institutions, amateur art production will simply not be shown unless it is either packaged as 'outsider' or 'folk' art, or mediated by a professional artist and presented as their work. So, for example, the amateur art work included in the *Folk Archive*, compiled by professional artists Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane, only becomes acceptable for exhibition because it is presented and attributed as their work.

A visit to *A Hard Merciless Light: The Worker's Photography Movement 1926-1939* (Reina Sofia, Madrid, 2011), provided an opportunity to examine how amateur work can be curated with more explicit counter-hegemonic intent. Curator Jorge Ribalta argued that it was important to show the Workers' Photography Movement (WPM) within a Western public art institution, as its cultural impact had been repressed as part of an ideological agenda to articulate the origin of modernism as 'an anti-Communist move'.¹³⁶ He aimed to demonstrate the influence of the WPM on the development of modernist and documentary photography. By extenuating the movement's emphasis on self-representation and determination, he also aimed to challenge the portrayal of the working classes as victims in other documentary photography exhibitions.

¹³⁴ Neil Cummings, and Marysia Lewandowska, 'From Capital to Enthusiasm: An Exhibitionary Practice in Sharon Macdonald and Paul Basu (eds.), *Exhibition Experiments*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2007 p.146.

¹³⁵ This point is also made and reflected upon by Tom Roberts. He questions the purpose of the Whitechapel exhibition in particular — describing it thus: 'gallery displays which seem to exist to validate the artists' practices in the eyes of funding bodies'. He also hints at the class and social bias that keeps amateur production out of art institutions: 'Of course, the real difference between the artists and the amateurs is in their respective access to more legitimate systems of valuation; they occupy very different positions in the social world'. See: Tom Roberts, 'Labour'd Enthusiasm', *Mute*, 18 May 2005. Available online at: <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/laboured-enthusiasm> accessed 14/10/2014

¹³⁶ In response to a question asking why he feels that the story of the Worker's Photography Movement has been repressed, Ribalta replies as follows: 'I think there are various reasons. The main is the Communist affiliation of the Movement. Let's not forget that the dominant narrative about the origins of modernism in the interwar period has been largely built under the Cold War US hegemony, and has been articulated as an anti-Communist move. The anti-Communist unconscious has penetrated deeply in art institutions under the US cultural hegemony since then; and I dare say that it remains influential in major museums today. An example is the American Photo-League: clearly a major force in the US photographic culture in the 1930s, it was dissolved in 1951 under McCarthy and has not been subject of any curatorial attention in that country since... Also, you have to understand that in Germany, for example, the WPM was repressed by the Nazi regime after 1933; that some photographers went into exile or to prison; and that their archives were lost or largely destroyed. There are stories of people burying copies of AIZ in their backyard in order to hide them from the Gestapo. This means that a lot of the work has remained unavailable, and all that exists for most authors is virtually what we have in the Madrid exhibition at the moment. This fragmentary condition does not fit with the dominant logics of authorship and oeuvre that predetermine what art history and its institutions usually code as artwork'. Jorge Ribalta quoted in Guy Lane, 'The Workers Photography Movement: Interview with Jorge Ribalta', *FOTO8*, 30th May 2011. Available online: <http://www.foto8.com/live/worker-photography-movement/> (accessed 01/10/2014).

The photograph originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The photograph was originally sourced at <http://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/exhibitions/hard-merciless-light-worker-photography-movement-1926-1939>

Fig. 62. Exhibition view. *A Hard, Merciless Light: The Worker Photography Movement, 1926-1939*, Reina Sofia, Madrid, 2011

Ribalta met with significant resistance to his explicit counter-hegemonic agenda. The exhibition was condemned by the right-wing Spanish press, on the dubious grounds that public art institutions had a responsibility to be 'pluralistic' in their politics, at all times. Ribalta rightly dismissed this charge as a form of 'neoliberal totalitarianism', designed to prevent strong oppositional voices being heard.¹³⁷ Indeed, he was unable to find any public art museum willing to show the exhibition, other than the Reina Sofia where he already had a long-standing working relationship with Manuel Borja-Villel.¹³⁸

He contends that such work is threatening to the ideological framework of such institutions because it promotes the idea that the working class should take control of the production of their own culture and representation. However, this ideological anxiety was, as is commonly the case, disguised as a straightforward issue of artistic quality. Ribalta argued that this simply demonstrated how the hegemonic modernist discourse clouds people's ability to see the quality in different modes of representation. He stated:

¹³⁷ Ribalta states: In Madrid a right wing newspaper attacked the exhibition and the museum for making what the rightist critic considered an apology for communism, and not adopting the necessary "pluralism" any public institution should keep. I have no patience for this reactionary and repressive well-meaning mentality. Even liberal pluralism produces its own forms of totalitarianism. Jorge Ribalta quoted in Guy Lane, 'The Workers Photography Movement: Interview with Jorge Ribalta, *FOTO8*, 30th May 2011. Available online: <http://www.foto8.com/live/worker-photography-movement/> (accessed 01/10/2014).

¹³⁸ Ribalta states: In Let me add here that not many museums would take an exhibition like this. And the proof is that it didn't get to travel to other venues. Jorge Ribalta quoted in Guy Lane, 'The Workers Photography Movement: Interview with Jorge Ribalta, *FOTO8*, 30th May 2011. Available online: <http://www.foto8.com/live/worker-photography-movement/> (accessed 01/10/2014).

Do not forget the depiction of abjection, indignity and ugliness in proletarian life, particular in Weimar, is one of the programmatic aspects of worker-photography. Their photos are ugly not because they could not do them better, but because they wanted them like that. That ugliness is extremely sophisticated, refined I'd say.¹³⁹

Displaying the work of the WPM in the Reina Sofia, thus, represented a way for Ribalta to expose the presumptions about quality that such institutions perpetuate, and to highlight their ideological underpinnings. For Ribalta, a more critical question was whether the WPM genuinely constituted a movement of working class amateurs, as much of the work he found was actually produced by professionals.¹⁴⁰ He revealed that the biggest challenge in exhibiting amateur art production is that 'by definition, anonymous amateur production is absent from public archives'.¹⁴¹ Therefore, he conceived of the exhibition as a means of 'making visible the politics of curatorial practice'; highlighting the various inclusions and exclusions, and the issues this raised, in the interpretative texts. This was a strategy I aimed to adopt for the display of WPM work in *What's Left?*

Where *Enthusiasm* and *A Hard Merciless Light's* portrayal of amateur art differed from others was in their focus on the political objectives of the movements, and the collective, critical framework that the work was developed through. These exhibitions provided both possible works and curatorial inspiration for *What's Left?*. I proposed a display of the magazines that formed the critical and collective discursive space of the movement. Arguing that showing key issues, such as the *Arbeiter Illustrate Zeitung (AIZ)* from 1926 — which featured the original call to amateur proletarian photographers — or *Der Arbeiter Fotograf* from 1931 — with Willi Münzenberg's attempt to define the objectives of the movement — would highlight the movement's leftist imperatives. Juxtaposing the pioneering photo essays, developed as part of WPM, with similar work by the Hackney Flashers or Allan Sekula, would highlight the influence of WPM on the leftist documentary photography that emerged in 1970s Britain and America. It would

¹³⁹ Jorge Ribalta quoted in interview by Guy Lane for www.foto8.com <http://www.foto8.com/live/worker-photography-movement/> accessed 01/10/2014

¹⁴⁰ Ribalta notes, for example, how difficult it can be to determine such photographers' status as amateur or professional or to ascertain whether amateurs or professionals played a leading role. Jorge Ribalta quoted in Guy Lane, 'The Workers Photography Movement: Interview with Jorge Ribalta, *FOTO8*, 30th May 2011. Available online: <http://www.foto8.com/live/worker-photography-movement/> (accessed 01/10/2014).

¹⁴¹ Jorge Ribalta quoted in Guy Lane, 'The Workers Photography Movement: Interview with Jorge Ribalta, *FOTO8*, 30th May 2011. Available online: <http://www.foto8.com/live/worker-photography-movement/> (accessed 01/10/2014).

highlight the absurdity of the WPM's exclusion from the art historical narrative offered by public art institutions.

Proposals were also made to include work from the Polish Amateur film clubs, featured in *Enthusiasm*; the Ashington Group of Unprofessional Painters, and the Nicaraguan Pintura Primavista paintings from Solentiname. The intention was to highlight the centrality of dialogical critical exchange to amateur art production. In the case of the Polish amateur film clubs, the inclusion of two amateur films, the aforementioned *Narodziny Filmu* and *Nieprofesjonalni Z Paleta* (showing an amateur painting club discussing and critiquing each other's paintings) would make immediately visible the importance of collectivity and critical discourse to the amateur movement. However, drawing out the importance of collective critical discourse, to the Ashington Group or the Solentiname commune, is not so straightforward, as these factors are not visually evident in the paintings themselves. Moreover, the 'naïve' appearance of these paintings made it more challenging to bring the intellectual and critical aspects to the fore. It was important to develop a way of displaying this work that effectively communicated that dialogical critique *was* the cornerstone of their practice.

The Ashington Group of Unprofessional Painters was chiefly comprised of working miners who attended an art appreciation class, facilitated by the Worker's Education Association.¹⁴² The Group consolidated their collective practice through a set of group principles that were aimed at protecting the 'unprofessional' status of the group, and reaffirming the value of amateur art production.¹⁴³ They hoped to create an exemplary model that would inspire other workingmen to develop similar groups. Though they sold their work, the price was kept to a minimum and driven straight back into the collective for the purchase of equipment and materials, to ensure that their continued focus was on making as an intellectual and creative experience.¹⁴⁴ Their approach was

¹⁴² Robert Lyon of Durham University was hired by the WEA to teach a class on art appreciation, which the miners had requested. However, he found that they were unreceptive to his traditional method of teaching by showing slides which highlighted the formal aspects of classical art works, instead they wanted to learn about how things were made so they agreed to try making work for themselves.

¹⁴³ 'This sums up, very neatly, the distinctive ethos of the Group. Members had to agree to accept criticism from their colleagues and to abide by the rules of the Group, usually agreed after lengthy meetings, which could stretch long into the night. They resisted fame and professional respectability, naming their group the Ashington Group of Unprofessional Artists'. See: Paul Stanistreet, 'Painted from Life', *Adults Learning*, December 2006, Vol. 18 Issue 4, p.26.

¹⁴⁴ Janet Adam Smith related the deliberate and considered nature of the members desires to remain amateur, in an article for *The Listener*: 'All the men insist that their work is a special affair, done to please themselves,' she wrote. 'They are shy of outsiders seeing it and criticising it as they would criticise the work of full-time artists. They don't want to become full-time painters. They

rigorously debated and informed by an active engagement in leftist theory and politics. Harry Wilson, for example, provided a clear expression of the Marxist theories of alienation, when he stated that the act of painting provided, ‘an outlet for other things than earning my living; there is a feeling of being my own boss for a change and with it comes a sense of freedom’.¹⁴⁵ Most important to the group was that amateur art provided a means of participating in non-alienating labour. The level of critical reflection in their practice highlights the fallacy of representing all ‘self taught’ art production as intuitive and individualistic. The central curatorial challenge posed by this work, therefore, lay in communicating their strategic, politicised way of working.

In the very different social context of late twentieth-century, Solentiname, Nicaragua, the processes of critical reflection and ‘learning-through-making’ was also key to the development of the ‘Pintura Primitivista’ paintings. They inspired the Sandinistas’ (*Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional*, or FSLN) whole cultural programme, which comprised a range of initiatives designed to promote, develop and give legitimacy to amateur art production. This included inviting painters to give lessons to rural labourers, creating a nationwide network of ‘Popular Centres for Culture’, and theatre farm cooperatives, whose aims were to intertwine artistic practices and agricultural production. The Sandinistas were profoundly influenced by Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire argued that providing opportunities for creative production together with active dialogical exchange could engender, in people, a self-determining agency, which enables them to become the author of their own transformation, rather than the passive element of someone else’s revolution.¹⁴⁶ Practicing poet and FSLN Minister of Culture, Ernesto Cardenal, based their new cultural program on the dialogical approach he developed with the campesinos on the isolated, rural, island community of Solentiname. Displaying these paintings represented a means of

don’t want to send in work to the Royal Academy or the London Group. They don’t want to be looked on as curiosities, publicised by dealers as “Miner Painters” and made a collectors’ fashion. Their only motive in selling their pictures (at a pound or thirty shillings) is to get money for painting materials and their only reason for exhibiting them now is to stimulate other tutorial classes to try the same experiment.’ Janet Adam Smith, ‘Experiment in Art Appreciation’ *The Listener*, 23 March 1938.

¹⁴⁵ Harry Wilson, quoted in Paul Stanistreet, ‘Painted from Life’, *Adults Learning*, December 2006, Vol. 18 Issue 4, p.26.

¹⁴⁶ Freire argued that participation in cultural production would help the popular classes overcome political and economic exploitation, by engendering in people a self-determining agency, which enables them to become the author of their own transformation, rather than the passive element of someone else’s revolution. Cardenal was, in particular, profoundly influenced by the ‘dialogical method’ of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, which was utilised to create a methodology for the implementation of the Sandinistas’ cultural policy. The basic premise of Freire’s method was that every human is capable, through discussion with others, of gaining a critical understanding of the world they occupy. Cultural progression required the suppression of the paternalistic teacher-student relationship in favour of an active dialogue between both parties. See: Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, New York, 1981, p.13 and David Craven, *Art and Revolution in Latin America 1910–1990*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2002. p.125.

exploring the Sandinistas' wider cultural policy and would allow us to challenge the hegemonic representation of amateur artists as devoid of critical reasoning skills.¹⁴⁷

In Solentiname Cardenal facilitated the campesinos participation in regular debates about social equality, using a Marxist reading of the bible to analyse their present living conditions. He extended this dialogical method to the teaching of painting, prompting critical discussion around existing work, by asking questions. Members of the group began to make paintings and would bring their work to the group for critique, leading to the creation of a thriving creative community where art was as much part of the day-to-day lives, of the inhabitants, as rural labour.¹⁴⁸ Cardenal argued, in his celebrated 'open letter', *Lo que fue Solentiname (What was Solentiname?)*, that collective participation in critique had radicalised the community and led to all members, men and women alike, to participate in the armed struggle against Somoza. An unfortunate consequence of this, however, was that Somoza ordered the complete destruction of the commune. Photographs of the destroyed paintings assumed an almost martyr-like status. They became world renowned as symbols of the Sandinista's wider struggle, when they were circulated in postcard form by international supporters. They even became the subject of a famous short story by acclaimed Argentinean author Julio Cortázar, entitled *Apocalypse at Solentiname*.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ The FSLN was initially a national front not a single party and was composed of various left-wing (mainly Marxist and student) groups, meaning it was not an orthodox Leninist vanguard with a uniform and unyielding line on particular issues such as art. The new cultural program they were committed to develop was therefore not to be a top down imposition of one particular cultural style, such as the Socialist Realist model in the Soviet Union, but rather a new pluralistic national culture developed through an ongoing dialogue with people at every level of Nicaraguan society. See: David Craven, *Art and Revolution in Latin America 1910–1990*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2002. p.124

¹⁴⁸ The Campesinos created the name *Pintura Primitivista* to describe their pictorial style, in order to underscore the non-professional nature of their work, and to describe their stylistic references to indigenous cultural forms. For more on Cardenal, Solentiname and the dialogical method, see: David Craven, *Art and Revolution in Latin America 1910–1990*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2002. p.125

¹⁴⁹ Julio Cortázar, 'Apocalypse at Solentiname' in *A Change of Light and Other Stories*, Knopf, New York, 1980.

The photograph of this painting was originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The image was sourced from David Craven, *Art and Revolution in Latin America 1910–1990*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2002.

Fig. 63. Olivia Silva, *Coffee Harvest, la cosecha de café (con el Ministro de cultura, Ernesto Cardenal)*, 1982.

There were two central challenges in formulating a display of this work. Firstly, that much of the work had been destroyed or otherwise was too expensive to ship, and secondly, in representing the process of dialogical critique, essential to its production. I argued that a narrative sequence of slides, viewed through specially commissioned view masters, could solve the issue of relating the centrality of dialogical critique and the unavailability of original work. This slide sequence would contain images of the original paintings interspersed with quotes from Ernesto Cardenal's *Lo que fue Solentiname (What was Solentiname?)*, about the use of the dialogical method and extracts from Cortázar's *Apocalypse of Solentiname*, describing viewing slides he had taken of the paintings, from the comfort of his home in Paris. This related how his sense of awe at the perfect equality that these paintings engendered, quickly turned to horror when he saw a prophesy of the paintings ultimate destruction, and the massacre that took place.¹⁵⁰ The view master slide format would echo the Cortázar story,

¹⁵⁰ In this story, Cortázar photographs the paintings with slide film, but when he returns to his apartment in Paris and settles down to view the slides, he is confronted with images of pure horror, torture and destruction, rather than the idyllic scenes he remembered. This was intended to be a reminder that true equality is rarely won without bloodshed and a metaphor for the violent responses, such as the CIA-backed assassination of Salvador Allende in Chile, that Marxist approaches to democratic equality have inspired from Western liberal democracies. A year later, the scenes of destruction prophesied by Cortázar came true. Several members of the Solentiname community were involved in the Sandinistas' general uprising in 1977 and in retaliation Somoza ordered the destruction of the Solentiname parish, library and in particular its primitivist paintings and murals.

bringing the visitor into uncomfortably close contact with the work. It would highlight the inadequacy of viewing the work isolated from its social and political context and the horror of its subsequent destruction.

Learning through making

We should work towards the development of a truly popular culture, that is to say, of the people, at the service of the people, we must drive for the creation of more atelier populaires.¹⁵¹ **Atelier Populaire**

As I argued earlier, Tate Liverpool's specific constructivist methodology was inappropriate for this exhibition because the 'ways of looking' approach focuses on the final art object as *the* source of meaning. It is thus closed off to the possibility that the production of the object is also a process where meaning is actively constructed. Moreover, focussing on subjective looking may counter the idea of 'objectivity', in the formal-aesthetic mode of appreciation, but it still gives primacy to a form of distanced looking that negates the part that other senses (particularly touch) can play in cognitive processes. However, I did not discount the value of constructivist methodologies all together. Taking Jean Piaget's constructivist principle that knowledge is a consequence of experience, I argued that an understanding of the making process can be enhanced through, or grounded in, personal experience.¹⁵² As this exhibition firmly locates the production of meaning in the process, it represented an opportunity to experiment with providing opportunities for visitors to 'learn through making'.

Craft and art-making is generally not permitted in art galleries because it may comprise the conservation of valuable art objects. Lenders will not allow such objects to be shown if certain substances are used in the gallery space itself. Nonetheless, as Fiona Candlin has argued, the prohibition of touch, and thus making, from the gallery space is also deeply inflected with class politics.¹⁵³ She contends that touch only became excluded as a form of appreciation when the working-classes were permitted

¹⁵¹ Atelier Populaire, 'General Assembly of the Strikers in the École des Beaux Arts', in Johan Kugelberg, *La Beauté est dans LaRue, The Beauty is in the Street: A Visual Record of the May '68 Paris Uprising*, Four Corners Books, London, 2011 p.35.

¹⁵² Jean Piaget was a Swiss Developmental Psychologist who studied how children learn and emphasised the importance of experience to the learning process. He advocated the development of experiential or discovery learning techniques, in formal education.

¹⁵³ Fiona Candlin, 'Museums, Modernity and the Class Politics of Touching Objects', in Helen J Chatterjee (eds.), *Touch in Museums: Policy and Practice in Object-Handling*, Berg, Oxford, pp.10-16

unregulated entry to the museum. The ruling classes feared that working class people would 'dirty' or contaminate the work if they came into direct contact with it. Thus, distanced looking was promoted as the only 'correct' method of appreciating art to the working-classes, whilst touch was still discreetly permitted to experts and elite visitors behind closed doors. Candlin argues that the legitimacy of 'contemporary anxieties about conservation', particularly the wholesale prohibition of making and touching in the gallery space, must be challenged in order to democratise learning about art.¹⁵⁴

In this exhibition, helping the viewer to understand art as a production process through the demystification art making, must take primacy over the inclusion of original art objects. The New York-based curatorial collective Triple Candie — 'that produces exhibitions about art but is largely devoid of it' — served as inspiration for an approach that could obviate concern about conservation restrictions.¹⁵⁵ They argue that the concentration of original art objects in the hands of already wealthy and powerful institutions, restricts critical exhibition making. Consequently, they developed 'art-less exhibitions' about art — creating their own reproductions, surrogates and models; employing photocopying, slides, everyday objects, and print outs — to relate critical art-historical narratives.¹⁵⁶ *Undoing the Ongoing Bastardization of the Migration of the Negro by Jacob Lawrence*, (Triple Candie Gallery, New York December 2, 2007 - January 20, 2008), for example, used reproduction as a method of showing all sixty of Lawrence's paintings.¹⁵⁷ The aim was to counter the partial representations of this work in Museum retrospectives. This challenge to the notion that a productive viewing experience must be centred on final art objects, was extremely consistent with the wider aims and counter-hegemonic objectives of *What's Left?*, and complimented the focus on alternative distribution and presentation strategies. This example, was therefore, used to argue that if it were not possible to include original art objects alongside art-making in the gallery space, we could still create innovative displays by using reproductions, copies, recreations and illustrations.

¹⁵⁴ Fiona Candlin, 'Museums, Modernity and the Class Politics of Touching Objects', in Helen J Chatterjee (eds.), *Touch in Museums: Policy and Practice in Object-Handling*, Berg, Oxford p.15

¹⁵⁵ Triple Candie, *Purposes and Philosophy*, available on their website: <http://www.triplecandie.org/About%20Purposes.html> (accessed 15.05.2015).

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ For more details and installation shots from both exhibition see the Triple Candie website: <http://www.triplecandie.org.html> (accessed 15.05.2015).

The photographs originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The images were sourced from <http://www.triplecandie.org/About%20History.html>

Figs. 64-69. Triple Candies' 'Art-Less' Exhibitions from 2006-2008: (Top and centre left) Installation shots from: David Hammons: The Unauthorized Retrospective, Triple Candie Gallery, New York. January 8 - February 12, 2006, (Top right and bottom and centre left) Undoing the Ongoing Bastardization of the Migration of the Negro, by Jacob Lawrence, Triple Candie Gallery, New York December 2, 2007 - January 20, 2008, and (Bottom Right), Flip Viola and the Blurs (Misrepresenting an artwork can result in a non-art experience of comparable value), Triple Candie Gallery, New York, June 17 - August 12, 2007

My proposed 'interpretative' framework centred on the creation of activity stations in the exhibition-space, where the visitor has the opportunity to participate in the production processes used to make a given artwork, and to produce their own art. This approach was predicated on the understanding that, because making is, in itself, a form of critical thinking, it could offer a more effective way of learning about artist's decision-making and working process (why specific techniques were used and how they connect to political values) than looking and reading alone.¹⁵⁸ The working practices of both the Solentiname painters and the Ashington Group, which embraced the principles of 'learning through making' and collective critical dialogue, served as inspiration for the activity stations.

¹⁵⁸ The value of 'learning through making' has been well established in both museum studies literature and formal education literature. Most museums now offer some form of activity room or learning environment, which allows the visitor to participate in making or problem-solving tasks, and offer a more meaningful 'hands on' experience than simply pressing buttons. Although in Science, Industry and Craft based museums it is common for such environments or activity stations to be situated in the gallery itself (amongst the exhibits, in art galleries, making activities tend to be kept completely separate from the art works on show. This is normally justified in relation to conservation. For more on research into the benefits of experiential learning see George E. Hein, *Learning in the Museum*, Routledge, Oxon, 2000, p.143-146.

I proposed a reconstruction of the hut where the Ashington Group made and talked about their work (figs. 71 and 72). On the door to the shed there would be a copy of the group rules, which emphasised their rationale for remaining 'unprofessional'. Whilst reproductions of their works in progress, and photographs by Humphrey Spender that highlighted the collective and critical dimensions of the groups practice, would hang on the inside walls. However, in accord with the group's belief that the best way to learn about, and understand, art was to make it yourself, the space would primarily be used as an art-making studio, replete with working tables, chairs, equipment and materials.

The space could also function as an informal and comfortable space for reading, and for group 'crits', where people could discuss, and reflect upon, what they had made in the 'making studio' or seen in the exhibition. It could feature the 'view master' slide viewers that related the narrative of the Pintura Primitivista paintings production and destruction, in addition to relevant books about art and politics, and a library of slides of other artworks that that we would have liked to have included, but couldn't.¹⁵⁹ I argued that having the slide library would enable us to make clear that the exhibition is only a partial representation made with the resources at our disposal. Moreover, conscious of the lack of audience engagement with the terreiros at the Sao Paulo Bienal, I argued that the space must be laid out and clearly signposted, in order to make it absolutely explicit that the materials inside were intended to be used by the audience, as they wished.¹⁶⁰ By combining the provision of opportunities for non-alienated creative art making with politically informed collective critical discussion – in the way that Ernesto Cardenal did at Solentiname — the aim was to prompt questions about working conditions under neoliberalism.

¹⁵⁹ Further proposed ideas included showing a screening of the play *Pitmen Painters* by Lee Hall, which would provide not only an audio-visual narrative of the formation of the group, but also the political and social context. They also included commissioning a reprint of the 1980s postcards featuring Pintura Primitivista paintings, produced by leftist cooperative Leeds Postcards, in support of the Sandinistas, and make them available in the room. For a history of Leeds Postcards see their website at: <http://www.leedspostcards.co.uk/aboutus.aspx> (accessed 16.05.2015).

¹⁶⁰ I argued that the idea of 'user-defined' function, purportedly offered by the terreiros, was disingenuous as the programme, entry and use was actually dictated by the institution, and visitors tended to avoid the spaces outside of officially programmed activities, as it was unclear whether they were allowed to enter, what they could use them for- and there was little material to engage with inside the spaces themselves.

The photographs originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions.

Fig. 70 and 71. The Ashington Group of Unprofessional Painters at work in their hut, Archival Photographs, Private Collection, London.

The second proposed 'activity station' was a printmaking 'atelier' dedicated to the work of Atelier Populaire. This was intended to provide an opportunity for the visitor to participate in a production process, specific to an artwork, that would draw out the relationship between art making and politics, more generally. Atelier Populaire were a collective of socialist artists, students and workers who came together in May 1968 to occupy the painting and lithography ateliers of the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts, in Paris, and produce posters in support of striking workers.¹⁶¹ They produced a manifesto entitled *Atelier Populaire Oui, Atelier Bourgeois Non*, which set out their desire to challenge the privileged status of artists as autonomous and distinct from other workers. They believed the idea of autonomous art was a false-freedom, which prevented artists from exercising any real change on society. The assembled group developed a specific working process that would strategically eliminate the expressive hand of each individual artist and, instead, produce an anonymous uniform style that could cement their collective identity.¹⁶²

Thinking about how to put together a display of such work posed several challenges. Firstly, how to focus attention on the working process that they used, and get across the point that their whole approach was motivated by their political values? Secondly,

¹⁶¹ The collective union was essentially formed when members of the Salon de la Jaune Peinture met with the Comité des grèves des Beaux Arts and decided that the production of posters was the best way to become involved in the growing student and workers movements. The first poster was produced on May 14th, 1968- but on May 16th a general assembly was formed and the principles of the manifesto for the Atelier Populaire set out. For a description of the movements formation from one of the founders see: Phillipe Vermès, 'The Late Sixties', in Johan Kugelberg, *La Beauté est dans LaRue, The Beauty is in the Street: A Visual Record of the May '68 Paris Uprising*, Four Corners Books, London, 2011 pp. 9-10

¹⁶² 'Everyone respected the principle of anonymity concerning the posters designer and writer. The idea was to keep the effort collective to avoid bourgeois values.' See: Phillipe Vermès, 'The Late Sixties', in Johan Kugelberg, *La Beauté est dans LaRue, The Beauty is in the Street: A Visual Record of the May '68 Paris Uprising*, Four Corners Books, London, 2011, pp.9-10.

how to mitigate the fact that the people who produced the work were against its display in an art gallery context? They believed that presenting the posters, as ‘art’ would objectify the posters, recuperating them as part of the ‘bourgeois system of oppression’, rather than positioning them as an active part of a political process.¹⁶³ Therefore, the very display of the posters in a gallery such as Tate would negate the intentions of the artists. It was, thus, important to consider how we could include this exemplary materialisation of leftist values, without simultaneously negating these values and the purpose for which the work was created. Furthermore, the work is so iconic, that Tate Liverpool’s marketing team immediately recognised the potential revenue that Atelier Populaire inspired merchandise could generate for the gallery. However, this would clash with the anti-capitalist position embedded in the working process and, specifically, with Atelier Populaire’s resistance of the commoditisation of the work. Persuading the team not to sell reproductions of the work was particularly difficult, given that it is deliberately copyright free.

The fact that the Atelier Populaire formed a non-profit association called UUU (Usine Université Union) — specifically to aid people in creating their own ‘Atelier Populaire’ — offered one possible solution to these issues.¹⁶⁴ I proposed that we create an Atelier Populaire in the exhibition space — a printmaking station where people could produce stencils and screen prints — following the methods outlined in the *Atelier Populaire Oui, Atelier Bourgeois Non* manifesto?¹⁶⁵ This would include providing stencils for the casual visitor to produce copies of the Atelier Populaire designs, which they could take away if they wished, subverting the intention to sell them as merchandise. Or, if the maker allowed, we could use them to cover the walls of the ‘atelier’, obviating the need to loan the ‘original’ posters. By showing them as part of a working process, we could neatly avoid presenting them as valuable art objects. Inviting students, activists, artists, unionists and workers to come together to produce screen-printed posters, in

¹⁶³The group stated in their original manifesto, which was reproduced in their 1969 *Atelier Populaire* book: ‘Bourgeois culture is an integral part of the system of oppression which the ruling class has erected against the interests of the people...To challenge the cultural system from the inside rapidly leads from challenging art to the art of challenge, another form of bourgeois art as cut off from other people and of no use to the people’s struggle. These different attitudes in the long run provide an alibi for the system of bourgeois culture and keep’s people’s minds away from the real fight’. Atelier Populaire ‘General Assembly of the Strikers in the École des Beaux Arts’, in Johan Kugelberg, *La Beauté est dans LaRue, The Beauty is in the Street: A Visual Record of the May ‘68 Paris Uprising*, Four Corners Books, London, 2011, p.35.

¹⁶⁴ See: Phillipe Vermès, ‘The Late Sixties’, in Johan Kugelberg, *La Beauté est dans LaRue, The Beauty is in the Street: A Visual Record of the May ‘68 Paris Uprising*, Four Corners Books, London, 2011 p.10.

¹⁶⁵ The manifesto and their guide to their production process is reprinted here: Atelier Populaire, ‘General Assembly of the Strikers in the École des Beaux Arts’, in Johan Kugelberg, *La Beauté est dans LaRue, The Beauty is in the Street: A Visual Record of the May ‘68 Paris Uprising*, Four Corners Books, London, 2011 p.34-36.

support of striking workers, would also firmly position the work as part of an active political process and avoid the objectification and commoditisation of the work.¹⁶⁶

The approach outlined here relates to my counter-hegemonic aims and objectives, in several ways. Firstly, by inviting people to participate in making in the exhibition space- and by providing links to existing maker communities – we could validate non-professional art production, and stimulate visitors to continue producing their own art. Secondly, by situating the ‘activity stations’ in the exhibition itself, we could challenge the prohibition of touch, in art institutions, and open up a different form of learning that might be more relevant to the lived experience of different social classes. Finally, by providing platforms for critical discussion, alongside opportunities for making, we could encourage the idea of art making as a means of self-actualisation.

Framing the exhibition as perlocutionary act

The educator has the duty of not being neutral. **Paulo Freire**¹⁶⁷

Although visual communication, learning through making, and collective discussion formed the core of my proposed interpretation strategy, it was still necessary to use limited amounts of textual information, in the exhibition. I argued that it was crucial to use these in-gallery texts strategically, to mobilise people’s political passions and to empower people to question authority positions on art and politics. It was, therefore, important to define what position we would speak from, in these texts, and what kind of voice we would speak with. Additionally, how we would address the viewer, and whether we would employ the standard Tate Liverpool style and formats.

Tate Liverpool standard format for in-gallery text was inappropriate for *What’s Left?* It would make little sense to use an approach that focussed on the viewer’s individual interpretation, and deliberately restricting information about the artists intention would mystify the production processes used, and their political grounding. Moreover, I

¹⁶⁶ With the stagnation in wages, huge cuts in public spending and unrest amongst NHS staff, teachers, and local government employees, it is incredibly likely that there will be some strikes or demonstrations in Liverpool during the duration of the exhibition.

¹⁶⁷ Paulo Freire in Myles Horton and Paulo Friere, *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*, Temple University Press. Philadelphia, 1990.

argued that disingenuously presenting exhibitions as the speech act of a neutral, objective and authoritative institution, by using the third person, is a mistaken approach to viewer empowerment. It encourages the passive acceptance of ideas and, thus, represses critical judgement and debate.¹⁶⁸ In order to constitute more critical viewing subjects, I argued it was instead necessary to work against the grain of the anti-authorial turn that I had identified (see Chapters One and Two). Influenced by WHW's unique approach to curating the 11th Istanbul Biennial, I proposed to make the curatorial team's authorial voice present and identifiable in the space, to exaggerate the fictive and subjective qualities of the exhibition medium, and to construct a polemic capable of stimulating debate.

I argued that a clearly authored and strong argument, backed up with contextual information, was needed in *What's Left?* in order to persuade the viewer that the exhibition's thesis was valid. This was particularly because information pertaining to both art production processes — and the influence of leftist values on modern art — has been repressed. In order to introduce new knowledge into the world, it is essential to make an argument heard. So, why would the leftist curator not seek to use the exhibition as a platform to make their case? Making a strong argument does not have to be patronising or repressive. We wouldn't accuse an academic of patronising their readers because they presented a partisan position in an academic journal; indeed we would expect them to do that. So, then, why is it problematic for a curator to do the same? A university is also a publicly funded institution, but journal articles are presented as individually authored works rather than as the speech act of the institution. The same logic could, surely, be applied to temporary exhibitions?

I used Mieke Bal's analysis of how exhibitions enunciate or articulate concepts to the viewer, to guide the development of my approach to in-gallery text. Bal argues that the fact that art museums and curators interfere with 'the 'pure aesthetic' experience of art, is so obvious — so inevitable — that there is no reason to deplore it. She reasons that 'such a lament would testify to a purist illusion pertaining to the desire... to cut the

¹⁶⁸As Mieke Bal notes, the white cube model has been historically used to strategically silence the authorial voice of the exposing subject — who speaks with subjective opinions, ideas and values — by presenting work from the third person as if it speaks for a universal we. See: Mieke Bal, 'Exposing the Public', in Sharon MacDonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Malden, MA, USA, 2006 pp.525-542.

very bonds that link art to the social domain, outside of which art could not be produced, lived, or even be named'.¹⁶⁹ However, she contends that *it is* important to think about how exhibitions enunciate or speak to a subject. She uses the verb 'exposition' to emphasise the importance of thinking strategically about how curators make both things, and themselves, public.

Bal argues that the curator as 'the exposing subject' is making, not only, objects public, but also their own subjective opinions and value judgements. The exposition is, thus, 'by definition an argumentation' – a perlocutionary act, not simply an utterance – through which the curator consciously tries to produce an effect on the viewer (political, critical, emotional, spiritual or inspirational), through their choices, placements, juxtapositions and texts.¹⁷⁰ Hiding behind a mask of institutional neutrality is not only disingenuous but also contradicts the proper function of exhibitions. She suggests a different way forward from radical anti-authorialism (identified as the common approach of leftist curators in Chapter Two) that embraces the idea of the exhibition as perlocutionary act, and overtly reprises the idea of the auteur-exhibition. Such an approach focuses on exposing and exaggerating the authorship and, thus, the subjectivity of the curator, it represents a crucial means of undermining the false neutrality and authority of the art institution. Indeed, it more adequately reflects Mouffe's view that, in order to utilise the exhibition medium to articulate or to generate a productive political discourse, it is essential to openly negate the idea of the art institution as a politically neutral space.

Leftist exhibition-makers from outside the curatorial profession have implicitly understood that exhibitions will always be a construction; an 'impure' mediation which influences the viewer's understanding of art. Rather than imagining themselves as neutral facilitators, such exhibition-makers have aimed to exploit the perlocutionary aspects of the medium, and sought to instil the viewer with more political agency, by

¹⁶⁹ See: Mieke Bal, 'Exposing the Public', in Sharon MacDonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Malden, MA, USA, 2006 p.525

¹⁷⁰ A perlocutionary act is a speech act analysed through the psychological effect it has on the viewer, reader or listener, and the results of this effect, e.g. how it persuades the subject to do or realise something or enables them to think differently. Bal states that: 'an exposition is, by definition, an argumentation, whose enunciative situation, in which two voices alternate, is worth restoring'. And later: 'The expository act is thus a speech act – effective or in the jargon of analytical philosophy, performative'. See: Mieke Bal, 'Exposing the Public', in Sharon MacDonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Malden, MA, USA, 2006 p.529

finding ways to make the exhibition more legible and more affective. When socialist polymath, Otto Neurath, curated exhibitions in the 1920s for the Gesellschafts und Wirtschaftsmuseum in Vienna, for example, he understood the task of improving the legibility of exhibitions to be an important socio-political project that would instil in the working class citizens of 'red Vienna' the political agency to participate in civic decision-making. For Neurath, the unique property of the exhibition, which made it a potentially emancipatory medium, was that it facilitated comparison and contemplation on the viewer's own terms and, thus, allowed them to carefully formulate their own arguments, in relation to the material. He explained:

Visitors, for example, can stand around an exhibit, look for longer or shorter times, compare one with another. A filmgoer is presented with a set sequence; a scene appears and goes by quickly, he cannot turn back the pages.¹⁷¹

Neurath raises an important point relevant to the decentering of authorship and use of deconstructive strategies employed by leftist curators: by depriving the audience of a coherent and legible narrative, which enables comparison and analytical reflection, the curator would undermine the counter-hegemonic potential of the exhibition medium.

In sharp contrast to the anti-authorialism present in contemporary counter-hegemonic curatorial practice, Bal foregrounds the importance of emphasising the authorial voice of the curator. She argues that the potential danger of conceiving of the exhibition strategically as a perlocutionary act is that it can render the exhibition authoritative and, thus, close it off to dialogue and debate.¹⁷² This, however, can easily be avoided by acknowledging the curator's first-personhood in the in-gallery texts. In doing this, they can draw the viewer into a more equal and dynamic political dialogue. She presents speaking from the first person as the only viable means of avoiding the creation of authoritarian presentations, where the viewer is simply instructed — or equally flat, postmodern, thematic displays that say nothing at all.

¹⁷¹ For more on this see: Michelle Henning, 'Legibility and Affect: Museums and New Media', in Sharon MacDonald and Paul Basu, *Exhibition Experiments*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2007, p. 31

¹⁷² She uses the example of Rembrandt's *Women*, held at the Royal Academy in 2001 to show how third-personhood can produce a culturally damaging effect. She states: 'It presented itself in the 'third person' a grammatical figure that obscures it's anchoring in first-personhood. As usual, one was happy to have the opportunity to see so many works together that are usually separated, but the result was a culturally damaging perlocutive effect'. See: Mieke Bal, 'Exposing the Public', in Sharon MacDonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Malden, MA, USA, 2006 p. 530

Bal uses the example of *Painting as Crime* (Louvre, Paris, 2001), curated by Régis Michel, to illustrate her point. She demonstrates how labels written in the first-person, that brought the curator's intention to the fore, gave the viewer the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with the curator, which could exist despite their literal absence. Furthermore, Bal argues that speaking from the first-person pluralises the public by giving them the opportunity to take their own distinct position. She makes the case by comparing the exhibition with *Rembrandt's Women* (Royal Academy, London, 2001):

Although the London exhibition specified the public according to a gender division that turns everyone — man or woman — into a clone of the master who is supposed to have constituted an oeuvre as a typology of Woman, it treated the public as unified. The Paris exhibition, by contrast, pluralised it. The instrument of that pluralisation was the first person, the expository agent, who proposed, visibly, without imposing, so that each visitor could decide for herself.¹⁷³

Here, Bal proposes a model of auteurist exhibition-making that is more in keeping with Mouffe's concept of agonistic pluralism, than deconstructive exhibitions, which eschew the authorial voice completely.

I aimed to develop a non-authoritarian 'auteurist' approach to in-gallery text for *What's Left?* Following the logic that authorial clarity helps (rather than hinders) the empowerment of the viewer, I argued that it was important to ensure the exhibition was articulated as something that has been consciously constructed by the curator/s. Drawing inspiration from WHW and Régis Michel, I recommended strategically using the first person voice in the in-gallery text to undercut the institutional authority and frame the exhibition as a subjective argument. Although the words stem from the same root, an overtly authored text does not imply an authoritarian text – not all authored texts claim to be *the* authority on the subject. I argued that the in-gallery texts should not be thought of as 'interpretation materials'. Rather they should function as either statements of intent, or spaces to raise questions, contentions and tensions. The opening text, for example, could begin with a statement, written in the first person, in which, each curator introduces himself or herself to the viewer. We could then explain why we have chosen these particular works and decided to place them together in a

¹⁷³ *ibid.*

particular way – in this particular place, and at this particular time. The purpose was to make clear that it is people, not a ‘faceless’ authority, that made these choices – and hence that they were subjective, fallible and contestable. The captions for each individual work would similarly, describe the artist’s explicit political intention in making the work, and our specific intention in including it in this exhibition. By framing the artists as ‘authors’ with specific intentions for their work, rather than the ‘divined’ products of some distant genius, we can signify that the art works are also open to critique. In order to signify that the exhibition is never a complete text, it would also be important, however, to use the texts to point out the limitations of our curatorial authorship: that our decisions are always contingent on pragmatic considerations and financial resources. My position here echoes Mieke Bal’s call for ‘a practice of exhibiting’ that cuts through the illusion of objectivity by foregrounding the mechanisms, the decisions and the people who make the decisions.¹⁷⁴

I argued that in order to initiate a meaningful dialogue, the introductory texts to each section must employ questions that directly invite the visitor to critically respond — to become critic rather than viewer. They must also acknowledge the possibility of negative judgement. The consistent refusal, of art museums, to acknowledge the possibility of negative views of the art on display serves to maintain the dominant classes notion of good taste and disempowers those who do not appreciate the same type of art. There is no acknowledgement that the artist might not have fulfilled their aims for the work, that the viewer might have a critical opinion, or indeed, that they might not be ‘moved’ or interested in the work at all. The constant positive affirmation of artists work signifies to the viewer that there is an objective and universal correct taste in art – that the viewer *ought* to like or, at least, be able to appreciate the work. This negation of the negative frames all negative responses as backwardness, stupidity or conservatism. This can put people off talking critically about art, because it robs the viewer of the right to disagree. This right to have an antagonistic opinion, to express it openly in the public sphere and for it to be treated as valid and legitimate by those who disagree, is the basis of Chantal Mouffe’s agonistic pluralism. I proposed, therefore,

¹⁷⁴ She advocates ‘a practice of exhibiting... that aims to integrate a critique of transparency with a dialogue that activates the publics’. See: Mieke Bal, ‘Exposing the Public’, in Sharon MacDonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Malden, MA, USA, 2006 p.526.

that we, likewise, embrace her concept of 'radical negativity', using the in-gallery texts to raise questions and highlight critical interpretations of the work.

Pinot-Gallizio's industrial paintings, again, serve as a useful example for how this might work. The paintings would be placed within a section that related to the concept of disalienating labour. The introductory text would state our intention in bringing together these works, and make clear that the artists chose to develop specific production processes that could serve as a model for non-alienated labour. However, this text would also raise critical questions such as: 'could these concepts be transferred to the production of non-artistic works?' and 'do these strategies have any relevance to contemporary working conditions?' I had proposed that we replace the usual captions for each individual work with a short extract from the text, or manifesto, which, most clearly, sets out their ideas about the development of non-alienating production processes. In the case of Pinot-Gallizio, we would use an extract from his *Manifesto for Industrial Painting*. He declared: 'we have to control the machine and force it to do something unique, futile, anti-economic, (artistic) to create a new anti-economic (post-economic) but poetic (super-poetic), (magic-artistic) society'.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ See: Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio, *Manifesto for Industrial Painting: For a Unitary Applied Art*, 1959. This text was originally published in *Notizie Arti Figurative*, no. 9, 1959. It was shortly thereafter translated into French and published in *Internationale Situationniste* no.3, 1959.

4. Critically Evaluating ‘Counter-Hegemonic Curating from Within: From ‘What’s Left?’ to ‘Art Turning Left’

The exhibition I proposed underwent a long period of negotiation, research and development, before its realisation as *Art Turning Left: How Values Change Making 1789-2013*, at Tate Liverpool from 8th November 2013 – 2nd February 2014.¹ Although aspects of my original concept and organising principle remained, *Art Turning Left* differed substantially from the exhibition I envisaged in Chapter Three.²

This chapter critically evaluates *Art Turning Left* in terms of how far it met the specific objectives that I set out in Chapter Three in relation to Chantal Mouffe’s concepts. The experience of participating in the curatorial process at Tate Liverpool — together with interviews with members of staff at Tate, and analyses of press reviews, quantitative data and audience feedback — is drawn upon to interrogate the application of these counter-hegemonic strategies. Although the institutions intentions are represented as accurately as possible, they are only discussed where they complement, conflict substantially with, or prevent the realisation of, my specific counter-hegemonic agenda. To be clear, this chapter was not intended as a comprehensive evaluation of the quality of *Art Turning Left* as a final standalone ‘text’. Rather, the process of co-curating the exhibition is used as a lens through which to examine the viability of applying Mouffe’s theoretical propositions, and thus playing the role of the antagonistic guest, in the context of a publicly-funded, national, art museum. It was also used to determine, as far as possible, the potential of the alternative counter-hegemonic model I had proposed. Addressing each objective in turn, I ask; did the exhibition offer an effective form of post-political critique and counter the de-

¹It was located on the fourth floor of Tate Liverpool’s building on the Albert Dock. The first floor space – The Wolfson Room – originally ear-marked to be part of the exhibition, was given over to an archival display of Palle Nielsen’s social experiment at the Moderna Museet, Stockholm, entitled *The Model*. Early on in the project, I had proposed that this work be recreated, in some way, as part of the exhibition in the Wolfson Room. However, it was eventually produced as a stand-alone exhibition project, curated by Tate Liverpool.

² It is important to point out that these proposals were formulated over time, in relation to conversations with member of the curatorial team and other staff at Tate Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University. They were always adapted in relation to both what I thought was realistically possible to achieve and what I thought would be acceptable to Tate Liverpool. The basic premise of all these proposals were defined in late 2010, however, I continued to develop them, through research and meetings with the curatorial team, right up until March 2013 when I took a step back from the project in order to focus on this thesis and to allow the Tate Liverpool based members of the team to progress the project as quickly as possible as deadlines grew closer. Though the original concepts I have presented here were mine, they were formulated in specific response to the brief and requirements of Tate Liverpool and to questions raised by the changing curatorial team at Tate Liverpool, and my supervisory team at LJMU. They, thus, both aided the development of my ideas into fuller proposals. I have tried to acknowledge, throughout this section, all of the influences behind my specific ideas and have specifically emphasised what the differences were between my original ideal proposals and the ideas of the other members of the curatorial team- but even these original proposals must be understood to have developed as part of an active dialogue with others, and in relation to my specific circumstances- rather than in academic isolation.

ideologisation of politics in other institutional exhibitions? Was the exhibition articulated as a subjective, authored, cultural work and, if so, did this help to constitute more critical and active viewing subjects capable of challenging the neoliberal hegemony? Did the modes of installation and interpretation employed, work to demystify art production and open up the idea of non-alienated creative labour to others?

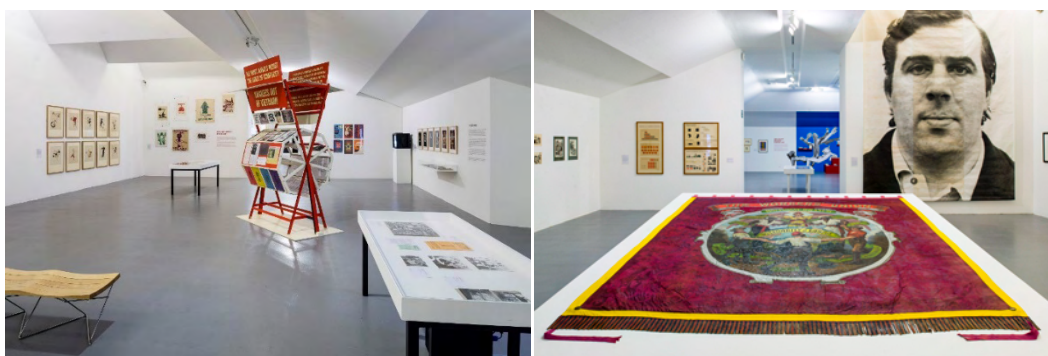
Art Turning Left was organised into seven distinct sections. They each posed a different question that leftist artists had attempted to resolve or address through the ways in which they organised their labour, made, displayed, and distributed their work:

1. Do we need to know who makes art?
2. Can art affect everyone?
3. How can art infiltrate everyday life?
4. Does participation deliver equality?
5. Can pursuing equality change how art is made?
6. How can art speak with a collective voice?
7. Are there ways to distribute art differently?

Within each section, works were drawn together by artists and collectives from such completely different times and places that, without the guiding problem, would have seemed unrelated. It, thus, retained the strategy of using incongruous juxtaposition as a form of distancing. However, the quatrain structure – juxtaposing four different artists (or collectives) in each section – was not utilised. There were a greater number of artists in each section, but a smaller amount of artworks and contextual material for each artist, than I had originally proposed. The complete list of works for each section are included in *Appendix 4*. However, in what follows, I detail one example to demonstrate the diversity and span of material in the all of the sections.

The visitor entered into a section entitled *Can Art Affect Everyone?* They were greeted by an initial introductory panel, which was presented as a *User Guide*. This outlined the central concept, explained the rationale for using questions as section titles, and directly invited the viewer to think about, and debate, the problems posed. The section (by far the largest in the exhibition) was also introduced with a shorter wall panel. It began with El Lissitzky's designs for *Victory of the Sun* (1920) and the Soviet Pavilion, *Pressa* (1928), continued with a selection of Atelier Populaire posters (1968);

followed by a collection of posters produced by Cuban artists for OSPAAAL (1960s to 1990s); a selection of pages from Bertolt Brecht's *War Primer* photo book (1939-1955); and a slide show and an archival display of the work of the 1970s photography collective 'The Hackney Flashers'. Adorning the centre of the space was an archival installation of the Argentinean Tucumán Arde exhibition project, mounted on a reproduction of a revolving propaganda kiosk by Gustav Klutssis, and a huge banner featuring the designs of Walter Crane, *The Worker's Union - Holloway branch - Solidarity of Labour* (1898).³ This was followed by a display of Cologne-based artist and designer, Gerd Arntz's bold woodcuts and isotype posters; a huge-scale portrait photograph taken from Braco Dimitrijevic's *Casual Passer-by series* (1976); and, finally, a selection of lamps, ashtrays, wall-hangings and photomontages produced at the Bauhaus (1920s and 30s). There were also reproductions of benches by Equipo 57, which appeared throughout the exhibition as seating for the visitors.



Figs. 72 and 73. Installation Shots of the first section of the exhibition; 'Can Art Affect Everyone?' showing the archival display of the Tucumán Arde project. © Tate, photograph Roger Sinek

The exhibition also featured an incarnation of the *Office for Useful Art*, which served as the base for the majority of the public programme. Independently of *Art Turning Left*, Cuban artist, Tania Bruguera, had developed the *Asociación de Arte Util* (the Useful Art Association); an international membership organisation that seeks 'to promote ways for art to work effectively in ordinary life and to initiate and support new projects that fulfil the criteria of Arte Util'.⁴ The opportunity arose to develop an iteration of the project in collaboration with Grizedale Arts, Liverpool John Moore's University and the wider L'Internationale network.⁵ The 'Office for Useful Art' was proposed as 'a working

³The archival display of the *Tucumán Arde* project was conceptualised and produced by History of Art students at LJMU in collaboration with Dr. Antony Hudek, Research Curator at LJMU and Tate Liverpool.

⁴See the press release for the *Office for Useful Art*, included in Appendix 4.

⁵This was to run parallel to the *Museum of Arte Util*, at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven.

office and education centre... that aims to explore the idea of the usefulness of art'.⁶ Staffed by students from LJMU's School of Art and Design, it functioned as both a drop-in resource for visitors and an open bookable space where local artists, groups, societies and university lecturers could host both private and public talks, workshops, debates, seminars, film-screenings and discussions.

As I was not involved in the physical installation of the exhibition, I encountered the exhibition for the first time at the private view, returning regularly throughout the duration of the exhibition to observe the ways in which visitors interacted with the works and with each other.⁷ My initial impression was that my counter-hegemonic objectives had not been realised. There was not a single selection of works that was displayed in accordance with my proposals; and the show seemed disappointingly similar in format and style to other retrospective survey exhibitions at Tate. In setting out the differences between my proposal and *Art Turning Left*, it is important to state emphatically that I am *not* claiming any superiority of exhibition making – after all, I was involved in many of the decisions. Rather, my intention is to draw out how Tate's own objectives, requirements and set practices complimented, restricted, or conflicted with the counter-hegemonic strategies I had proposed. This is used to reveal tensions and challenges in the idea that a guest curator can reinvent the institutional exhibition as a counter-hegemonic medium.

4.1 Did the exhibition operate effectively as a form of post-political critique?

In Chapter Three I argued that the most useful way that the exhibition could contribute to the countering of the neoliberal hegemony was to offer a form of post-political critique. The aim was to challenge the centrist, consensus-driven and technocratic concept of politics articulated in other institutional exhibitions, which, I argued, deprives people of a real political alternative and diminishes their political agency. The proposal involved developing a concept and organising principle that could foreground the ideological aspect of politics, reconnect people to their political values and foment agonistic debate. The concept I developed focussed on articulating the marginalised history of leftist art production and was thus designed to frame

⁶ Tate Liverpool, Press Release for Office for Useful Art, November 2013. See Appendix 4.

⁷ I gave birth to my first child very prematurely three months prior to the opening of the exhibition. His health issues and needs meant that I could not be involved in the final stages of preparation.

politics in terms of the left/right model of adversarial politics. The proposed organising principle — structured around key leftist ethico-political principles and values — was intended to bring conflicting political values and beliefs into confrontation with each other.⁸ The focus on the left undoubtedly presented a challenge to the notion that publicly funded art institutions should be non-partisan, or even apolitical. So how willing were Tate Liverpool to embrace the concept I proposed and how able were they to bring left-right politics to the fore?

Tate Liverpool were surprisingly supportive of the general concept, and were willing to take forward the project that I had proposed. Anxieties were, nonetheless, expressed about the prospect of aligning the institution with leftist politics. The first question that was asked by the programme group, in response to the original proposal was, ‘why “the left” and not “the right”?’ This was a question that would certainly be directed at the curatorial team, once again, when the exhibition opened. It was, thus, important to clarify the rationale for focusing solely on the left. There were also valid concerns about the public perception of political bias and about the divisive nature of left-right politics.

Tate argued that they had a responsibility to serve all taxpayers and that the proposed exhibition might be seen as unrepresentative of the gamut of political views —or, even, exclusionary. There was also a potential threat to both their public and private funding in taking, what might be interpreted as, a partisan line. The new Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition had recently imposed significant cuts to Tate’s expenditure, and further cuts were threatened. This suggests that the reasons the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ are omitted from public art institution exhibitions are not connected to any conscious or simplistic desire to reinforce the neoliberal hegemony. Rather, there is a fear that the binary model opens institutions up to questions of political bias or partisanship, irks funders, and could, potentially, destabilise social cohesion.

⁸ Reintroducing the idea and terminology of ‘left’ and ‘right’ politics was crucially important because my research had found that these terms had effectively been written out of exhibitions of political art. This effective censoring of the idea of ‘left’ and ‘right’ politics was consistent and helped to reinforce the idea that there is ‘no alternative’ to neoliberal, centrist and consensus politics. Reintroducing this model of confrontational politics into the discourse of the exhibition, was, I felt, the most important, and potentially, the most effective, counter-hegemonic challenge to the dominant neoliberal hegemony, as it actively questioned the idea that there is ‘no alternative’ to the current way of doing things and reasserted the relevance of difference, dissensus and antagonism in politics.

I had considered whether it might be closer to the spirit of 'agonism' to construct the exhibition as a polemic between 'left' and 'right'. However, this approach was not pursued because the field of possibilities would have been too large to effectively demonstrate how both left-wing and right-wing political values had influenced the production and dissemination of art. Moreover, it was questionable whether there were enough openly right wing artists, who had strategically embedded their political values in their working practices, to set up a polemic that had any force.⁹ A sole focus on the left, on the other hand, could accommodate a fuller global perspective, incorporating leftist art production from Latin America, Asia and Africa. It would allow the state-sponsored and oppositional art from Socialist and Post-Socialist countries to sit together with work from liberal democracies. The intention was to avoid creating the moralistic good versus bad dichotomy that exhibitions of propaganda art tend to encourage, and to avoid conflating all forms of left, or indeed right, politics with totalitarianism.¹⁰

To counter the suggestion of bias, I reasserted that the story of how leftist politics has influenced the development of modern art has not been told, and that this story *is* an important part of art history.¹¹ If the focus on the left was perceived as biased, it could be made clear that it was, in fact, correcting a previous bias that had seen the history of leftist art production suppressed in public art institutions.¹² Potential accusations of

⁹ It is undoubtedly the case that a vast number of artists embrace capitalism, elitism and competitive individualism, have a deep respect for personal property rights and, in particular, copyright, value tradition and are strongly opposed to any imposition on individual freedom of expression by the state. This point was made recently by conservative MP, Ed Vaizey, at a debate about whether all modern art is left-wing at the Southbank Centre, London, 14th November 2007, who followed up with a declaration that 'modern art is right-wing' on the Guardian website. However, aside from perhaps Gilbert and George, Tracey Emin and going further back to Arno Becker and the Italian Futurists, there is a much less significant number of artists who are willing to openly and explicitly link their practice and their decision-making to right-wing ideologies. Whereas, leftist artists have tended to overtly declare the influence of their politics on their work. See: Ed Vaizey, 'Modern Art is Right Wing', The Guardian Online, 14th May 2014. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/nov/14/modernartisrightwing> (accessed 14.04.2015).

¹⁰ With this I wanted to build upon the work of the Sao Paulo and Havana Bienal, which I was able to visit during the course of this research project, in order to assert the relevance of 'third world' political art, I proposed to include work produced as part of the Mexican Revolution, the Cuban Revolution and the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua. I also proposed to examine the impact that Black Marxism, Pan-Africanism, the Negritude movement and the work of scholars such as Aime Cesaire and Leopold Senghor had on art in African and countries such as Senegal, Mozambique, Ghana and Tanzania, and the influence that the political left had on art in Japan, in Communist China and India. However, this proved difficult to realise due to limitations in time, the lack of existing secondary research and works available in Western collections. The costs of shipping some of the works that it was possible to locate, such as Papa Ibra Tall's, *Couple Royale*, 1976 (Government Collection of Senegal) was deemed prohibitive by Tate Liverpool.

¹¹ For a comprehensive analysis of how leftist politics has influence the ways in which artists make and do their work since the French Revolution see: Donald Drew Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts in Western Europe: A Cultural History from the French Revolution to 1968*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1970. This book was a particular influence on the development of this proposal as it set out a clear historical lineage of artists that demonstrated just how central leftist politics had been on the development of Modernism in Western Europe. This book showed that a significant proportion of the artists represented in the major modern art museums that define our conceptions of art, including Tate, MoMA, Reina Sofia, and the Pompidou, held leftist views that impacted on the decisions they made about how their art was produced and made public.

¹² Jorge Ribalta has argued that this was part of a Cold War, American Imperialist agenda that used art as a vehicle to articulate ideals of liberty and freedom of expression and to highlight the repressive and backwards nature of Communist governance. Showing the influence of leftist politics on some of the most renowned works in public collections would have compromised their

bias were further dispelled in planning meetings by pointing out that doing an exhibition about the left does not make the institution partisan. Talking about the left does not deny the 'right' exists: it stimulates the imagination to consider the alternatives. This is the power of the left-right dichotomy as an agonistic force: it is impossible to talk of one without creating an image of the other. Moreover, concentrating only on the left denaturalises the display and encourages the viewer to react, to take a questioning attitude to what is presented, and to locate their own position on the left-right spectrum. Being polemical can, thus, empower the viewer and activate a critical engagement with the exhibition and the politics that it presents. The idea of left/right politics undermining social cohesion was also easily rebuked. In democratic contexts, political affiliation, or identification as left or right, has rarely, throughout history, been used to justify unprovoked violence between citizens in the way that essentialist identities such as race and religion have. Indeed, as Mouffe argues, the value of the left-right framework is that it positions those with different views as political adversaries rather than enemies that must be defeated.

Tate Liverpool also questioned whether the terminology of 'left' and 'right' is too simplistic to describe the nuances of political art. Their relevance to political discourse in the era of post-ideological neoliberal consensus politics was rightly challenged. However, I used the research evidence of the World Values Survey to argue that 'left' and 'right' are highly nuanced and flexible ideas that adeptly describe political positions and values. As Alain Noël and Jean-Philippe Thérien assert, 'the world is primarily structured through debates' and the conflict between left and right structures most of the disagreements in global politics and 'does so in a significant and coherent way'.¹³ They describe the idea of the left and right as a 'social fact' – a set of 'shared memories or narratives that shape individual and collective behavior' – which, though abstract, are nonetheless real, present and incredibly influential.¹⁴ Their comprehensive research demonstrates that, far from being irrelevant to the general public in our apparently post-political times, the left-right spectrum is still what people across the globe use to locate their own political position and to signify their values

anti-Communist drive. See: Guy Lane and Jorge Ribalta, *Workers Photography Movement*, 30th May 2011. Available online at: <http://www.foto8.com/live/worker-photography-movement/> (accessed 01/10/2014).

¹³ Alain Noël and Jean-Philippe Thérien, *Left and Right in Global Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008. p.3

¹⁴ Alain Noël and Jean-Philippe Thérien, *Left and Right in Global Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008 pp.11-12

and beliefs to others.¹⁵ They claim that ‘to a large extent, it is this universal debate between left and right that makes politics intelligible within, and beyond, the boundaries of the nation-states’.¹⁶ It is, therefore, this framework that makes a politics beyond nationalism possible.

Despite these initial reservations, the broad proposal was accepted, by Tate Liverpool, surprisingly quickly. Although the individual members of the curatorial team (formed to take forward the project) did not necessarily share my specific counter-hegemonic objectives, they agreed that the subject was timely and relevant to contemporary politics and culture. The range and quality of possible works that could be included persuaded Tate that there was a viable exhibition project that could attract and engage a wide audience.

However, the proposed title of the exhibition – *What’s Left?* – quickly became one of the most contested and problematic parts of the curatorial process. Initially, though there had been concern expressed about how this title would translate into different languages if it toured abroad, surprisingly few reservations were raised on political grounds by Tate Liverpool. This changed in April 2012, as we approached the stage of announcing the exhibition to the press for the first time. It was revealed that Tate (the wider institution) was reluctant to support an exhibition if the word ‘left’ was included in the title.

What’s Left? was specifically discounted on two grounds. Firstly, that it could easily be misinterpreted as a negative reflection on the institution. And, secondly, Artistic Director, Francesco Manacorda, felt that the double-meaning would be confusing for the potential visitor and thus make it difficult for them to decide whether they wanted to attend or not.¹⁷ However, the reasons behind the exclusion of the word ‘left’ were more complex. From an audience development and marketing perspective, there was a fear that the term would be unappealing to a broad audience, and that those who

¹⁵ Noël and Thérien use global public opinion trends to demonstrate that ‘practically everywhere citizens understand this representation and position themselves along an axis going from left to right. The Left-Right cleavage is neither Western, nor passé. It is ubiquitous and very much contemporary’... The left-right debate is truly global’. See Chapter Two of their book which uses data drawn from the World Values Survey to evidence their claims. Alain Noël and Jean-Philippe Thérien, *Left and Right in Global Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp.32-55.

¹⁶ Alain Noël and Jean-Philippe Thérien, *Left and Right in Global Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008 p.3

¹⁷ Interview with Francesco Manacorda, 23rd July 2014, Tate Liverpool. See Appendix 6.

don't hold leftist views might feel alienated. Although it was never explicitly stated, there was a further concern that an overt focus on the left would feed into an already existing public perception of arts institutions as being inherently to the left of centre. This perception is sometimes strategically used by centre and right wing parties as a rationale for reducing the public funding of such institutions. A recent example is the reduction of public funding of art institutions in the Netherlands on the basis that they are 'playgrounds for left-wing intellectual posturing'.¹⁸ It was also suggested to me that the reluctance to use the term 'left' was, at least partially, driven by direct threats from key sponsors to withdraw funding.¹⁹ If Tate were concerned about political bias, it would, however, be deeply contradictory to effectively censor the term 'left' on the basis of the interests of private funders. Whether or not this is a practical judgment call – looking after the public interest by ensuring there is enough funding to put on major exhibitions – this cannot be regarded as a politically neutral position.

For Francesco Manacorda, although he was personally supportive of the focus on the left, Tate's specific status and mission as a 'national institution' meant that it was absolutely essential that the name did not imply partisanship or partial representation. He argued that, although it might be possible and appropriate for other types of art institution (such as artist run spaces or smaller organisations) to present a particular political position, Tate's national status meant that it was imperative for it to ensure it responded civically to all taxpayers, and did not attempt to influence others' political views.²⁰ He used the analogy of *The Red Cross* to argue that Tate must operate as a neutral facilitator amidst conflicting views, rather than take a position themselves:

It's not appropriate in the same way it's not appropriate for the Red Cross to take sides in a war, as they are there to do something else. It's not for the Red Cross to say 'these are the bad people and these are the good people', it is just to essentially provide a service – there is a difference.²¹

Although this may, indeed, be an accurate reflection of what is expected and demanded of state-funded institutions, this analogy makes clear that this position is

¹⁸ See: Charles Esche, *Do Not Go Gentle...*, Afterall Online, published 31.08.2011 <http://www.afterall.org/online/do-not-go-gentle> (accessed 05/05/2013).

¹⁹ Conversation with Andrea Nixon, Tate Liverpool, April 2012.

²⁰ Email correspondence, 17th December 2015.

²¹ Interview with Francesco Manacorda, 23rd July 2014, Tate Liverpool. See Appendix 6.

incompatible with the idea of agonistic practice that Mouffe proposes – which views antagonism and conflict as a potentially positive, progressive force for social change.²²

Because using the word ‘left’ in the title was crucial to my counter-hegemonic objective of asserting the relevance of the left-right model, I persisted to advocate for it. Tate agreed to test four titles in an online questionnaire that would gauge public reactions. Although Tate initially refused to include any titles, which contained the word ‘left’, they agreed that it would be valuable for my research to know how a public audience would have responded to such a title. The final four titles that Tate submitted for the *Title Testing Survey* were: *Believe/Make/Share*; *Changing Making*, *Making Change*; *Cause and Effect*; and *Left March*. I was invited to draw conclusions from the raw data and make a recommendation (see Appendix Two for full results and analysis).²³ The response to Question 3 ‘How appealing do you find the exhibition’ was extremely encouraging: it had a mean score of 7.4 out of 10. This compared very favourably with the summer blockbuster exhibitions such as *Chagall*, *Picasso* and *Turner, Monet, Twombly*.

However, there was a significant mismatch between the appeal of the exhibition and the proposed titles – the results indicated that none of the titles were particularly appealing and that *Believe/Make/Share* was actively off-putting. In contrast, the respondents were not put off by the term ‘left’. Only 6% found the specific left-wing focus of the exhibition, or the possibility of political bias, to be problematic. *Left March* – despite the military connotations – was the second most appealing title. It was adjudged by far the most accurate representation of the exhibition concept.²⁴ Indeed, the results demonstrated that the clarity of the political subject and the left-wing focus was what particularly resonated with many people. Respondents self-

²² Interview with Francesco Manacorda, 23rd July 2014, Tate Liverpool. See Appendix 6.

²³ Interestingly, I discovered by performing an in depth analysis of the raw data, and by cross-referencing quantitative and qualitative responses, that the first set of results that were sent to me by Tate were inaccurate and extremely misleading. The first set of results conveniently gave *Left March*, the only title to include the word ‘left’ in it, a mean (average) score for how appealing the exhibition is of 2.58 out of 10, which was the lowest mean rating overall and a significantly lower rating than for the exhibition overall at 7.3 out of 10.²³ However, I noticed that there was not a single rating over six by any respondent and that there was an exceptionally high score of 44% for two out of ten, which seemed inconsistent with the other results and most importantly seemed to completely contradict the quantitative data: several participants when asked to think of a better title stated that *Left March* was the best title but this was not reflected in their numerical ratings. I therefore asked that the results be rechecked with the market research company who conducted the survey. In response to this it was confirmed that these first results for *Left March* were in fact inaccurate, as there had been a ‘coding error’ and they were corrected and reissued.

²⁴ *Left March* was the only title to attract specifically positive comments, however the military connotations of the word ‘March’ mislead people into thinking the exhibition would be about direct propaganda or too militant. It had a significantly higher rating of 57% for either ‘very’ or ‘quite’ effective, compared to 34% for *Cause and Effect*. See Appendix 2 for a graph showing the amended results.

identified with the theme on a personal and political level, stating that they found it appealing as they are 'a socialist' 'left-wing' or 'working class'.²⁵ The indication was that Tate should not shy away from these aspects. I recommended therefore, that we developed an alternative title that contained the word 'left' but avoided words associated with militancy. I suggested using one of the alternative titles put forward by members of the public: *Art Turns Left*, *Left Field*, *Left of Centre* or *Left Shift*.

The findings abated the fear that including the word 'left' would put people off the exhibition or compromise the institutions non-partisan position. When confronted with my findings, Tate Liverpool, to their credit, accepted the necessity of the word 'left'. They slightly adapted the suggestion of *Art Turns Left* to *Art Turning Left* and added the subtitle *How Values Changed Making 1789-2013* to give greater clarity to the content.²⁶ However, it has to be questioned whether the title survey was originally intended to be anything more than a ritual performance. Tate had, indeed, agreed to include the title *Left March* (the title of an Alexander Deineka painting and a Vladimir Mayakovsky poem), perhaps thinking it was unlikely to be accepted.²⁷ It is, thus, important to carefully examine what concept of politics was articulated by the wider exhibition, and how leftist politics was framed within the in-gallery texts. This experience also raised questions about how able and willing state-funded (or indeed privately funded) institutions are able to accommodate antagonistic views and stage conflict.

In evaluating the exhibition, it is important not to underestimate its central achievement; that it did introduce the previously marginalised history of leftist art production into the art historical mainstream. Just the fact that an exhibition about the political left was articulated from Tate Liverpool represented an important step in opening up the way public art institutions talk about politics. Moreover, the organising principle that was, ultimately, employed effectively brought different interpretations of ethico-political values into conflict with each other. It placed works in sections based around specific questions that leftist artists had commonly engaged with across

²⁵ Furthermore, the majority of respondents, 61%, suggested alternative titles that included the word 'left', such as *Left-Leaning*, *Look Left* or *Art on the Left*.

²⁶ It was argued that the process of changing practice was a gradual evolution not an abrupt transformation. The final title of the exhibition was thus *Art Turning Left: How Values Changed Making 1789-2013*.

²⁷ This name had been previously ruled out for being too militant to appeal to a generalist audience.

different places and times. This helped realise my intention of offering a common symbolic framework for the development of a renewed radical leftist project. By framing the works around shared leftist political values, I hoped that we could encourage the visitor to think about whether these were the 'right' values, and how they might be differently interpreted to foment a new radical leftist movement.

However, where the exhibition faltered as post-political critique was in the trepidatious and passive nature of the interpretative texts. This meant that there was a lack of clear statements of intent that directly connected the work, or the questions raised, with the different ideologies of the left. The introductory panel to the exhibition was, for example, the only text panel to tie the specific ethico-political principles mentioned to leftist politics. It stated: 'three core values common to all left-wing ideologies are a belief in the equality of all people, a quest for social progress, often linked to economic systems, and the conviction that working together is better than competing individually'. This text did not mention the 'right'. However, it set up a form of polemic by referring to the benefits of collectivism over individualism. Yet, this form of oppositional phrasing was not replicated in the wall panels or the exhibition labels as the viewer progressed through the exhibition. Indeed, the words 'left' and 'right' were not mentioned once in any of the in-gallery texts, and references to any specific leftist ideology (or the core leftist ethico-political values) were extremely rare.

The wall panels tended to explain how artists desired to change art-making practices, but did not explain that this was motivated by leftist political positions. Taking the wall panel for *Do We Need to Know Who Makes Art?* as an example, it stated:

The idea of the artist as an individual genius with a unique talent has dominated the history of art. However, this establishes a hierarchy, which not only gives some people higher status than others, but also ignores the benefit of working collectively. Artists have responded to this problem by working in groups, using methods that make it impossible to identify the individual contribution, or by keeping their individual identities a secret.²⁸

This text accurately reflects the concept for the section I set out in Appendix (1c). However, it does not directly tie these concerns with an anti-capitalist anarchist-

²⁸ Extract from the wall panel to the section: *Do We Need to Know Who Makes Art?* in *Art Turning Left*. The full texts of the wall panels can be seen in Appendix 4.

communist, socialist or Marxist position. Furthermore, the individual captions routinely de-ideologised the decisions artists made about how they produced, displayed and distributed their work. For example, the caption that accompanied the Atelier Populaire posters described them as: ‘conceived as an egalitarian act of solidarity, announcing their makers as individuals was deemed irrelevant’.²⁹ This positions their decision to produce the work anonymously, as if it were an afterthought. It did not acknowledge that the collective had strategically developed a mode of production that would eliminate the expressive hand of the individual artist in line with their anti-capitalist position.

The aim of establishing an important lineage of leftist art production was also undermined – to some extent – by the inclusion of less contextualising information, visuals and objects than originally proposed. Though the amount of in-gallery text was in line with standard Tate exhibitions, which are considered interpretation-heavy by museum standard, the archival objects that evidenced the artist’s political affiliation and the modes of visual interpretation I proposed – to make visible the production processes – were largely forsaken. Indeed, the vast majority of the contextualising objects I had proposed were dropped from the plans. The curatorial team’s perspective, still embedded in the *Ways of Looking* approach, was that it was important to limit contextualisation, in order to allow the viewer to form their own critical response to the work. There was also a concern that the paying visitor would expect to see a number of high quality finished art objects. However, the result of this decision was that it was rarely made clear which strand of leftist politics had influenced the artist, or how they had attempted to materialise their political values in their work. This issue will be revisited later in the chapter.

The visitor comments, collated by Tate Liverpool, further suggested that the ideological thrust of the exhibition was just too ‘watered down’ to counter the technocratic consensus-driven politics, or to instigate an agonistic discourse. One visitor summed this up perfectly when they wrote: ‘this exhibit is tame. Tate - where’s your fire’.³⁰ Another affirmed my point that the interpretative texts, in explaining the

²⁹ Extract from the caption accompanying the Atelier Populaire posters in *Art Turning Left*.

³⁰ *Art Turning Left Visitor Comments*, Tate Liverpool, January, 2014 (see Appendix Five).

art, tended to negate the political dimension. They stated that it was: ‘unclear if the point is art or politics – a missed opportunity. As a left progressive, I am very disappointed’. Another verified my instinct that without setting out the political intentions of the curators and the artists clearly, it would be difficult to stimulate critical, or indeed, ‘agonistic’ responses:

Dull Dull Dull! Nothing to inspire, nothing to uplift, nothing to admire, nothing to provoke, nothing to shock, nothing to love, not even anything to hate. Just dull.³¹

Negative comments, such as this, highlighted the lack of political thrust. They suggested that taking such a cautious approach to the articulation of leftist politics dampened the visitor’s political passions and, thus, limited the critical engagement with the exhibition.³² The fact that only one individual complained about the focus on the ‘left’, suggested that Tate could have been more overt in their focus on the ‘left’, without accusations of political bias.

In spite of the diluted articulation of politics in the exhibition, the focus on the ‘left’ did seem to work as a polemic force that inspired reaction and debate within the art press. This was particularly evident in more left-leaning broadsheets. Both *The Guardian* and *The Observer*, for example, published critical reviews of the exhibition and were, ironically, the only papers to question the focus on the Left. This included *The Guardian* printing a list of what could be included in a right-wing counterpoint to the exhibition, and attempting to set out a right-wing history of artistic production.³³ They didn’t, however, make an especially convincing case; declaring Casper David Friedrich right-wing, for example, simply because his paintings were appreciated by the National Socialist party. Indeed, Francesco Manacorda, commented that the most consistent feedback about the exhibition, raised by his curatorial peers, referred to the possibility of a similar exhibition focused on the right.³⁴ The binary nature of the term, thus, did

³¹ *Art Turning Left Visitor Comments*, Tate Liverpool, January, 2014 (see Appendix Five).

³² The only two comments alluding to the potential consequence of focusing on the left as opposed to the right. One framed this positively stating: ‘we hope there won’t be pressure to put on a right wing version!’ The one comment that did find the potential political bias problematic read: “Would you put on an exhibition of Nazi art? Typical state funded idiocy. “*Art Turning Left Comments Summary*, Tate Liverpool, February 2014 One visitor wrote, for example, that the exhibition was ‘so very relevant to today’s situation - nationally and internationally’. Another stated that they were ‘pleased to see that both artists and curators are still questioning our societies and cultures’. (See Appendix Five).

³³ Jonathon Jones, ‘The revolution will not be aestheticised: the top right-wing artists’, *The Guardian*, 6th November 2013.

³⁴ Interview with Francesco Manacorda, July 23, 2014, See Appendix Six.

not implicate Tate in political bias, but rather worked to instigate a discourse about right-wing art.

This polemic effect did not, however, transfer into the gallery space and engender an agonistic discourse amongst visitors to the exhibition. Though I observed many visitors discussing the works together with their immediate family or friends, there was little evidence of any collective discussion, let alone an antagonistic debate. The atmosphere tended to be staid and quiet. The visitors appeared concentrated, introspective and reflexive as opposed to animated and impassioned. The difference between what Mouffe advocates and what actually transpired was that people only tended to reflect on politics individually and inwardly, rather than through conversation and dialogical exchange with others. This is not necessarily a negative point, nor does it imply that the exhibition failed to meet the specific counter-hegemonic objectives I set out in Chapter Three. After all, in defining these objectives I specifically acknowledged the failure of previous attempts to institute the gallery as an agonistic, democratic space for political debate. I preferred instead to focus on creating a space that could contribute to the reinvigoration of the broader democratic project by enabling the visitors to think about, and reflect upon, their own ethico-political values. Indeed, the audience research and critical reviews suggested that one of the principle successes of the exhibition was that it stimulated people to think about politics in terms of ethico-political values, and to critically question their own political values and practices. Sarah Plumb, reviewing the exhibition for the *Museological Review*, for example, stated, 'I left the exhibition without a strong connection to specific artworks, but felt engaged, provoked, challenged and ultimately considering what my own political values are'.³⁵

There was, however, one section of the exhibition that, dispelled, at least some of my doubt about the potential of institutional exhibitions to operate as platforms for agonistic space: *Does Participation Deliver Equality?* This section featured Ruth Ewan's *Jukebox of People Trying to Change the World*. The feeling of radical defiance people seemed to derive from playing explicitly political music in an institutional space,

³⁵ Sarah Plumb, 'Exhibition Review: Art Turning Left: How Values Changed Making 1789 – 2013', Tate Liverpool 'in *Museological Review*, Issue 18, 2014, pp. 8-11

provided the right conditions needed to engender political dialogue and open up conversations between strangers. The sharp change in atmosphere indicated that an overtly ideological and polemic articulation of politics could have helped stimulate debate, but that it was somehow necessary for people to feel that they were directing their position against the institution rather than in agreement with it. It also suggested that it was even more critical – in terms of provoking free democratic discussion – to relax the usual social conventions of the gallery space. This suggests that the exhibition could have potentially functioned as a space for agonistic discussion, if the articulation of political positions had been more overt and direct – and if more had been done to promote collective discussion. The exhibition was ultimately, too mild-mannered and too depoliticised to ignite the political passions of the audience, or inspire spontaneous agonistic political debate within the gallery space. What was lacking was the dynamic and affective staging of conflict that Mouffe suggests curators of institutional exhibitions must employ to institute an agonistic space. The effect, thus, had more in common with deliberative democracy than the radical agonistic model that Mouffe advocates. The concept of quiet, contemplative viewing would have also needed to be noticeably challenged to enable people to feel comfortable debating the works and discussing politics in the gallery space itself.

The Liverpool Socialist Singers could have provided one solution to this problem of activating the gallery space. They were invited to perform a concert of explicitly Socialist songs – a brave move considering Tate’s need to maintain a nonpartisan position. Yet, this performance was held in the foyer. It could have been much more effective, as a counter-hegemonic strategy, if the performance had been held in the gallery space itself. It would have signified to the audience that individual, silent reflection is not the only way to appreciate and engage with art; opening up conversations, like the constant buzz of the educator’s tours did at the 29th Sao Paulo Bienal. The explicit leftist content of the songs could have rearticulated the whole space, temporarily, as a leftist polemic – in the way that WHW did at the 11th Istanbul Biennial. Nonetheless, the evidence from Chapter Two suggests that this kind of approach would have been unlikely to stimulate productive agonistic debate without a programmed critical platform for debate.



Fig. 74. Liverpool Socialist Singers performing at Tate Liverpool as part of Art Turning Left, 18th January 2014. Photograph Lynn Wray.

It is also important to consider whether the exhibition could offer the open, public, democratic space that Mouffe argues is essential to engender a productive agonistic discourse. The 'Office of Useful Art' would have ideally functioned as a space for collective political discussion, and enabled the development of a 'chain of equivalence' that brought different leftist arts, cultural and political groups together, around a common symbolic framework. However, it did not serve to accommodate these connections, or to engage casual visitors to the exhibition in political debate. This was partly because there was little take up from political groups of the offer of hosting debates within the space. Instead it came to function more as a seminar space for university programmes and lifelong learning groups.³⁶ The classroom aesthetic further situated the space as a formal learning environment. This, unsurprisingly, confused visitors about the purpose of the space; whether they were able to participate in the different sessions, and how they were otherwise meant to engage with it.³⁷ In its

³⁶ The only open public discussion was the Philosophy in Pubs session held on Sunday November 17, 2013, which used the exhibition as a starting point to discuss leftist values and their relationship to art.

³⁷ Head of Learning, Lindsey Fryer responded to my question about why visitors might have felt unsure about entering and engaging with the space as follows: 'The OUA really operated as a hybrid I feel - somewhere between an art work and a public

emphasis on the ‘usefulness of art’, the Office for Useful Art project also contradicted the aim of changing the visitor’s focus from how art can effect political change to how politics has changed the way art is made and done.³⁸ The purpose of this was to avoid making the dubious claim that politically engaged art has instigated dramatic political change in wider society. Instead, the aim was to use art as *one* example of how political values could be put into practice as part of everyday life and work.

Similarly, although we made a strong effort to entrench the values of collectivism, solidarity and equality in our curatorial processes, the retention of some entrenched institutional practices partially undermined this endeavour. We curated as a collective team. Moreover, we worked in solidarity with other organisations with similar ideals – from Grizedale Arts to the Worker’s Education Association – even if the institutional setting did not encourage the formation of a ‘chain of equivalence’ capable of challenging the neoliberal hegemony. Most significantly, the curatorial team strived to embed the principle of ‘equality’ in the planning and production, working to democratise the articulatory space of the exhibition. Tate Liverpool had already demonstrated a clear commitment to this ideal in their education strategy and previous exhibition projects; for example, allowing Young Tate (now the Tate Collective) to curate a collection display called *Sense of Perspective* and enabling the local audience to define their own cultural values in *The Fifth Floor* (2008). They continued this democratising project by inviting a PhD student, with limited curatorial experience, to propose and co-curate a major international exhibition. Inviting Art History students from LJMU to curate an archival display of Tucman Arde’s work further demonstrated their willingness to break down hierarchies of power. However, the decision to host a private view undermined this genuine effort to democratise and equalize the space, as it signified the very idea of exclusivity and class hierarchy that

space for dialogue. Embedding such a space in a gallery context that was sometimes inhabited and sometimes not was problematic and inevitably will produce some uncertainty in some visitors. We did aim to have someone in the space at all times to welcome people and to explain the function and this could have worked better. It was meant to be slightly bigger and may have afforded us more space to welcome observers if something was going on in the space. Interpretation spaces/rooms where there are reading materials, images, films, interactives don’t usually have these barriers - quite the opposite, so it was interesting to observe different behaviours in such a space where they may be felt unsure about the function. The idea behind it being a ‘classroom’ aesthetic might have contributed to how people felt about the space’. Email interview with Lindsey Fryer, 27th March 2014. (See Appendix Six).

³⁸ The press release stated the following about the Office of Useful Art’s role in the exhibition: ‘using the exhibition as a textbook it offers visitors a platform to develop a renewed understanding of art, as a process that plays a fundamental role in shaping the world in much the same way that pre-twentieth century art predominately operated as a religious, ritual, practical or educational tool as part of daily life’. (See Appendix Four).

we were trying to disarticulate. Tate Liverpool clearly missed the irony of positioning the words ‘private view’ above the slogan ‘art must be for all’ on the e-invitation.

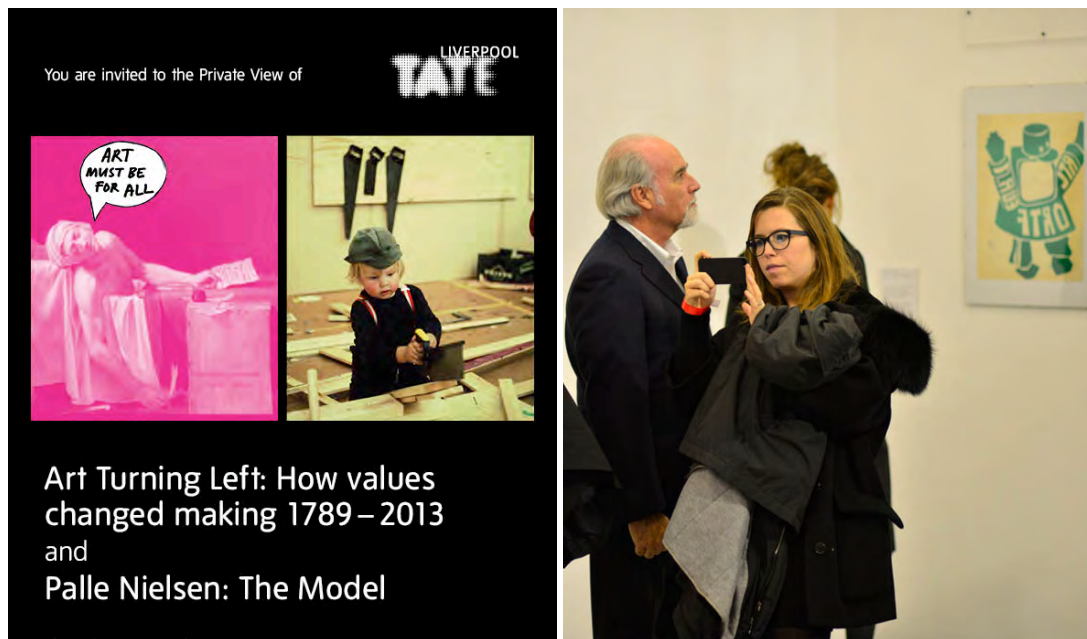


Fig.75. (Left) The Private View E-Invite for Art Turning Left and Palle Nielsen: The Model (cropped) © Tate, and Fig. 76. People admiring the Atelier Populaire posters at the private view. © Tate, photograph Roger Sinek

In order to clearly signify that we were attempting to democratise the space, I had also proposed a ‘pay what you can’ pricing strategy, where the audience defines the amount they are able or willing to pay. Tate Liverpool were extremely supportive of the idea but they lacked the confidence to operate the pricing strategy for the whole duration.³⁹ It was finally agreed that, during the second weekend of January (18th and 19th January 2014), we would host a ‘pay what you can afford weekend’.⁴⁰ This approach proved incredibly successful in terms of both my counter-hegemonic objectives, and the institution’s audience development targets. It doubled the audience figures for the whole show in a single weekend. Head of Media and Audiences at Tate Liverpool, Jemima Pyne reported:

It worked very well!... Interestingly some visitors paid more than the standard ticket price, a few paid very little but the most popular price was £5, our

³⁹ They felt that existing research, on the method, suggested that it might only be effective as an incentive to visit, if it were a temporary proposition. They were also concerned that if it was extended over the run of the whole exhibition the strategy would be uneconomical, as the costs of the exhibition would too significantly outweigh what we could hope people would voluntarily contribute in ticket prices — and were, thus, unwilling to take the risk.

⁴⁰ The interview I conducted with Jemima Pyne indicated that Tate Liverpool’s motivations for accepting my proposals for the ‘Pay What You Can Afford’ strategy were not just altruistic but were rather motivated by a need to increase footfall in the quietest period in the exhibition calendar. She stated: For the past few years we’ve experimented with a ‘winter sale’ to boost visits to the special exhibition in January. The gallery is at its quietest around the 2nd weekend of the year, when the weather and lack of disposable income meant visitors needed to be lured in. Previously, we’ve priced all exhibition tickets at £1 and promoted the weekend on social media with some supporting press’. Interview with Jemima Pyne, 17th March, 2014. (See Appendix Six).

standard concession. The shop had a very successful weekend and shifted lots of written off stock. Public reaction was good and staff enjoyed working during the weekend. Francesco is keen that we repeat the exercise with *Keywords*.⁴¹

As Pyne notes, purchases of the catalogue and sales in the café and shop went up significantly, and footfall stayed high, even after the weekend, through positive word of mouth. Although this does not prove that the strategy would have improved the audience figures so dramatically if extended for the whole exhibition run, it certainly suggested that it was financially viable.⁴²

The pricing strategy also served to encourage discussion in the gallery and provided a way in for the visitor to engage with some of the key ideas in the exhibition.⁴³ One of the biggest barriers to creating an atmosphere in the gallery space, which encouraged discussion, had been the lack of visitors. However, during the 'pay what you can weekend' there were noticeably more people in the space, which helped change the atmosphere of the previously staid space. People seemed less quiet and reflexive, and much more conversational and politicised. Many of the visitors commented on the pricing strategy – what they had decided to pay and why – in relation to their own political values. In this sense, it worked as a means of post-political critique. Having to think about the ordinary, mechanical process of paying opened the visitor up to thinking of politics as something defined by ethico-political principles from the outset. Both the quantitative data and the visitor comments suggested that the decision not to extend the strategy for the whole duration was mistaken, particularly because the relatively high fee of £8.00 for entrance was interpreted as being elitist and exclusionary, and contrary to the spirit of the exhibition.⁴⁴ If we had extended the strategy, we might have built a substantially greater audience, over time, improved the atmosphere of the gallery space, and stimulated more political discussion and debate.

⁴¹ Interview with Jemima Pyne, 17th march, 2014. (See Appendix Six).

⁴² Francesco Manacorda also offered a very positive evaluation of the strategy as a means of empowering the visitor and expressed his interest in repeating the exercise for a whole exhibition run. Interview with Francesco Manacorda, July 23, 2014, See Appendix Six.

⁴³ Audience comments for January included: "Am very impressed with your left wing exhibition. But very, very impressed by your pay what you can afford weekend. Art should be for all!! Thank you." And "An interesting test of the law of reciprocation @tateliverpool this w/e " Taken from : *Art Turning Left* Comments Summary, Tate Liverpool, January 2014. (See Appendix Five).

⁴⁴ *Art Turning Left* Comments Summary, Tate Liverpool, January 2014. (See Appendix Five).

4.2 Did the interpretation strategy work to empower the viewer?

In Chapter Three I argued that the most effective way to constitute more critical viewing subjects would be to disarticulate the myth of the institutional art exhibition as a neutral space. I argued – following Mieke Bal’s compelling analyses – that speaking from the first person in the in-gallery texts, and addressing questions directly to the viewer, would position the exhibition as a subjective argument that it is possible to agree with or disagree with. I proposed that the introductory and section texts should be written as statements of curatorial intent, rather than ‘interpretation’, and that sensory affect should be employed to facilitate an active engagement with the material. This would mean negating Tate’s corporate brand for their in-gallery texts, which speak in the third person, in a neutral tone. My proposed approach, was more in line with Mouffe’s agonistic pluralism, as it would, at least in theory, open up the text to critical scrutiny and invite a plurality of responses; effectively pluralising the public. However, the curatorial team, the Head of Learning and the Interpretation Curator, ultimately decided on the interpretation strategy.⁴⁵ Hence, in order to evaluate whether this strategy worked to activate and empower the viewer, it is first necessary to establish whether or not my proposals were enacted. Was Tate willing to undermine their institutional authority and work against the contemporary trend of decentering curatorial authorship and limiting information, in the name of the active reader? Only then can we establish whether the interpretation strategies, that were ultimately used, offered more political and intellectual agency to the visitor.

The in-gallery wall panels and captions clearly show that Tate’s interpretation strategy was never intended to position the exhibition as a subjective argument. The existing Tate style and format were retained, and this, thus, continued to signify the institutional authority of Tate. However, this authority was not undercut by using an authorial first-person voice, as proposed. The opening text (see Fig. 77), for example, was articulated entirely in the third person. When the writer states, “*it* raises issues such as ‘How can art be distributed differently?’”, they present the exhibition as a sentient being. Such rhetorical devices may seem innocuous, but they serve to obscure the fact that the exhibition is a subjective cultural experience, constructed by people

⁴⁵ Although I was involved in the earliest meetings between the curatorial team, the interpretation curator and the Head of Learning-where the introductory texts were discussed- due to the premature birth of my son, I was not able to be involved with the later meetings or available to agree the final texts. The first time I saw these texts were on the opening night of the exhibition.

with particular intentions.⁴⁶ Although the writer directly addresses the viewer, at one point, by stating 'you are invited', the text doesn't reveal who is doing the inviting.

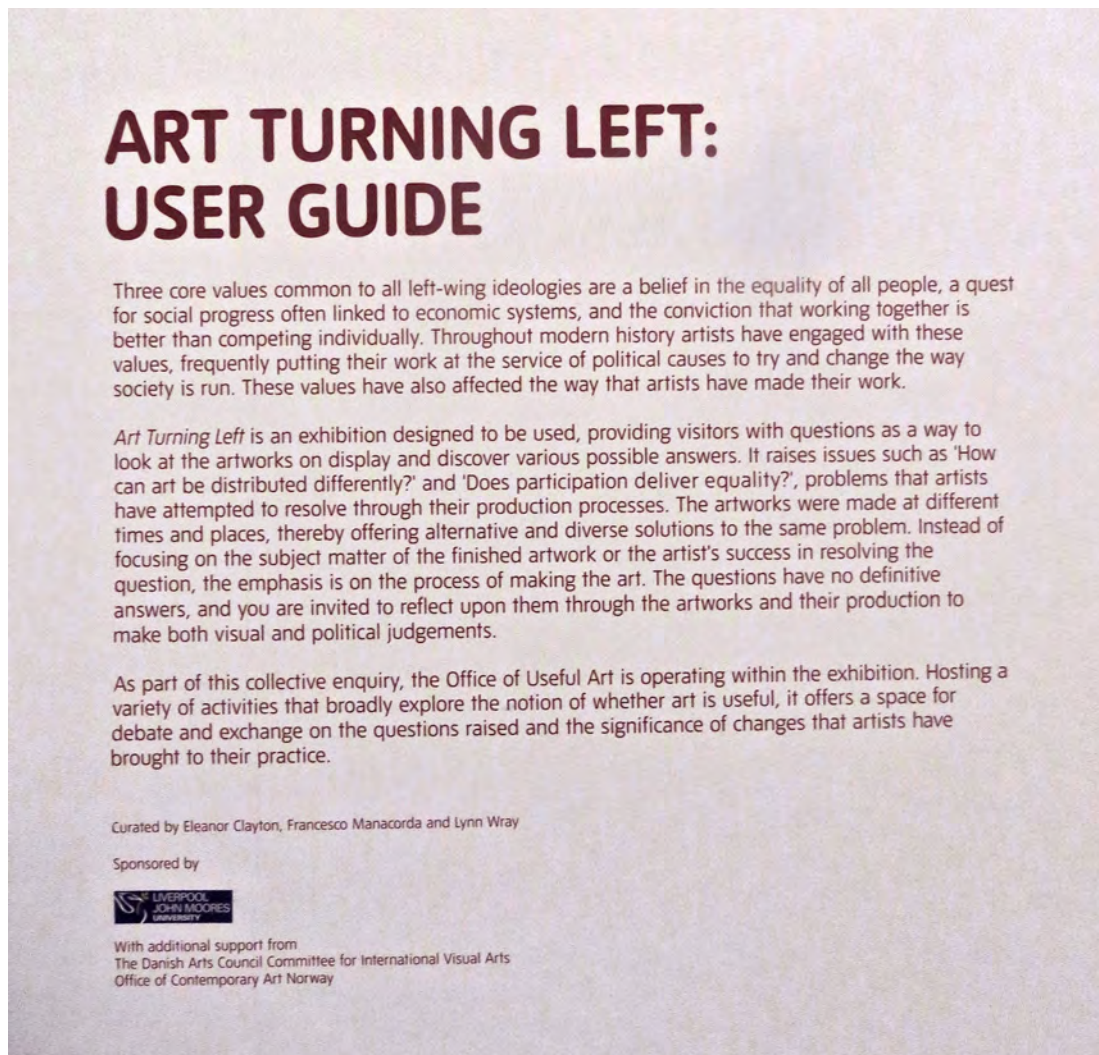


Fig. 77. Installation view of the opening text panel or 'User Guide' in 'Art Turning Left'. © Tate, photograph Lynn Wray

The interpretative texts, introducing each section, continued with the third person voice and adopted a neutral position on the questions raised in the titles. They similarly positioned the exhibition as an autonomous entity – existing independently of the people who created it. For example, the wall panel for *Does Participation Deliver Equality?* stated: 'within the range of participative practices there is a question over how the will to operate more equally has shaped different positions and whether participation really does indicate equality between the artist and the public'. The passive voice fails to acknowledge that it is the curators-as-authors who are raising this

⁴⁶ The writer did subtly acknowledge that the exhibition has been produced for a specific reason by stating, 'Art Turning Left is an exhibition that is designed to be used' but this still negates the authorship of the curator and avoids taking responsibility for what is presented. In my view, a more effective way of putting this would have been: 'We, the curators, have designed Art Turning Left as an exhibition to be used'.

question, or offer any viewpoint that the visitor could either agree or disagree with.

My contention is that these texts could have better encouraged a critical reaction, or fomented debate, by taking a definitive position; or by posing more politicised, antagonistic or polemic questions. For example, the above section text could have read:

By bringing these works together we are calling into question whether so-called participatory art works truly create a more equal relationship between the artist and the public. We are inviting you to consider whether these works are egalitarian gestures; or is the artist serving their own ends? Who should be credited as the author of the work in participatory projects?

I had proposed that the captions accompanying each work should similarly describe the artist's political intention in making the work, *and* our specific intention in including it in this exhibition. By framing the artists (and the curators) as 'author-producers' with specific intentions for their work, I argued that we could open up the ideas, processes and techniques presented, to critical interrogation. Moreover, by embracing Mouffe's idea of 'radical negativity' and including critical perspectives, we could also work against the solely positive affirmation of artists work in public art institutions, that leaves no space for alternative views and restricts intellectual agency.

Despite Tate Liverpool having experimented with democratic approaches to interpretation and even subjective, authored captions in previous exhibitions, the final captions, followed the standard institutional template: statements of fact rather than opinion, written in the third person and restricted to less than ninety words.⁴⁷ Often, they made no reference to their place within, or their relevance to, this specific exhibition. For example, the full text of the caption accompanying El Lissitzky's *Victory Over the Sun* designs read:

Following the Russian Revolution, El Lissitzky, who had been a successful fine artist, became a teacher and architect, and produced public art and propaganda in the service of the state. *Victory over the Sun* was a Russian Futurist ballet about world domination, which premiered in St Petersburg in 1913 with costumes and sets by Kazimir Malevich. For its rerun in Vitebsk in

⁴⁷ Including inviting local Taxi drivers to record conversations with their passengers about Modern art for the interpretation in the 2007 Turner Prize exhibition, for example.

1920, El Lissitzky produced a portfolio of designs for mechanical figures in the bold, geometric, Soviet-approved style.

This work is from the Tate collection and the text is a standard caption that had probably been used before. It makes no reference to El Lissitzky's own political position or to how this was connected to the way he made, displayed or disseminated his work. Nor does it offer an explanation of why it is included in the specific section – *Can Art Affect Everyone?*

Artistic Director, Francesco Manacorda, has, retrospectively stated that they specifically rejected my proposal to position the exhibition as a subjective, authored text, as they wanted – like Francesco Bonami, at the 52nd Venice Biennale – to challenge the auterist conception of the curator-as-author.⁴⁸ He argued that to have a subject speaking through the in-gallery texts would be inconsistent with Roland Barthes notion of *the death of the author*, and hence the political position put forward by artists like Equipo 57 and Luis Camnitzer.⁴⁹ Examples of their work had been brought together in a section of the exhibition that had been re-titled, *Do we need to know who makes art?* This had been adapted from a section I had formed around the development of scientifically derived methodologies as a means of democratising and collectivising art production, which included Equipo 57's — but not Camnitzer's — work. This intention of de-authorising the exhibition was never made known to me during the curatorial process. This meant that I could not challenge it by referring to the models of counter-hegemonic practice, based around a decentring of curatorial authorship, which I had analysed and rejected in Chapter Two. It highlights, however, why the exhibition was such a confusing proposition; it was always being worked upon for opposing purposes.

The rationale for this approach is so different from my original proposals, that it actively contradicts their purpose. It is, thus, necessary to unpack it now, in more detail. There are several points I can raise against it, and in favour of the original proposals. Most importantly, the whole concept of the exhibition is contingent on its,

⁴⁸ Email correspondence, 17th December 2015.

⁴⁹ Here he references Roland Barthes, familiar statement – the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author, made in: Roland Barthes, 'The death of the author.' *Contributions in Philosophy*, 83, 2001, pp.3-8.

admittedly unfashionable and controversial, focus on the political intentionality of the author. It is this that the exhibition puts forward as a route into articulating a politics defined around ethico-political principles, and to understanding art as a potentially political practice. If art is to be situated as a political praxis, it does *matter who makes the work* and why. In making claims for art making as a politically-engaged practice; it becomes necessary to reclaim the importance of authorial (or artistic) intent from its premature banishment to the land of the dead. It would be deeply contradictory to apply the concept of *death of the author* —which argues that authorial intent is irrelevant to understanding a work — to the production of in-gallery texts.

Acknowledging the political intention of the artist/author in developing their working method, does not demand a romantic understanding of the artist as a uniquely creative individual genius, capable of absolute originality, and distinct from other types of producer. What matters is not so much the identity of who made the work, but rather how their ideological viewpoint, and their political and social commitment, was used to inform the development of their technique. Hence, like much of the work exhibited in the erroneously titled section — *does it matter who makes art* — it is perfectly possible to challenge the romantic notion of the author/artist as individual genius by, instead, positioning the author-as-producer, and, thus, presenting art as analogous to any other act of socio-economic production. Work like Equipo 57's, OHO's, Atelier Populaire's and the Neo-Impressionists, reflect such an artisanal view of authorship (similar to Walter Benjamin's in his famous essay *The Author as Producer*), which emphasises a focus on technique as a means of bridging the false dichotomy between artistic (literary) quality and political commitment.⁵⁰ They used scientific principles to develop and share new techniques that would enable new forms of collective production: they could, theoretically, empower anyone, regardless of their artistic prowess, to systematically produce artworks.⁵¹ Hence, the romantic concept of the author as genius is challenged in order to democratise art production, but the ideological intention and social commitment of the author remains a crucial part of understanding their motivation in the development of these methods. Indeed, literary critique Seán Burke has convincingly argued that *The Death of the Author* — in its

⁵⁰ Walter Benjamin, 'The author as producer', *Reflections* 229, 1978.

⁵¹ These techniques were also intended to activate the audience and embed a particular ideological concept of social relations.

emphasis on interiority and its failure to return discourse to the public — belongs to the romantic tradition that such artists opposed.⁵²

The application of the *death of the author* concept, to the in-gallery texts, was particularly misguided, as it focuses solely on the final artwork as the object of inquiry, negating any regard for how it was produced and any study of extrinsic influence. According to my proposal, art would never have been presented as final objects that the viewer is expected to extract a specific meaning from. In my formulation, the viewer is *not* asked to interpret or decode the final art objects at all, rather they are called upon to *critically examine* the work as a whole production process. They are presented with the artist's political intentions, and the political and social context in which the work was produced and invited to make critical judgements about the political efficacy of forms of practice they developed. In this sense, the exhibition is inviting the visitor to take on the role of 'critic' rather than 'reader'. This is a crucial distinction, as it sets up a completely different dynamic between the curator and the visitor. It assumes an equality of intelligence from the outset. Acknowledging the existence of the curator-as-producer, and pushing forward their critical voice in the in-gallery texts, assumes that the visitor has the intelligence to form their own position, and respond. As I argued in Chapter Two and Three, making an argument in an exhibition is not necessarily disempowering. Rather — so long as it made clear in the in-gallery texts that there is a person behind the argument — it can open it up to critical interrogation, and engage the viewer in a dialogue. Hence, allowing the visitor to understand our specific intentions for the exhibition — to perceive our positioning of art as a political practice *as an argument* — is paramount to enable a critical response to the exhibition itself. It is also democratising, as it positions the visitor as a co-critic, or co-investigator, of the questions posed.

In retrospect, it is clear that persuading the institution to implement such a strategy was always going to be incredibly challenging. Firstly, unlike WHW who were formed specifically around a shared political agenda, our curatorial team did not have a unified position to state, on the majority of the questions raised. Secondly, as a regional branch of a national institution, with an increasing need to protect and justify its remit, Tate Liverpool has always promoted the social value of art. Taking a too critical view of

⁵² Seán Burke, *The Death And Return Of The Author*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2008.

any art, and participatory art in particular, might have undermined the integrity of the institution's social remit. Finally, 'authorial intent' is one of the least fashionable concepts in a curatorial discourse that remains resolutely indebted to the legacies of New Criticism and Post-Structuralism.

The curatorial team did, however, bring another aspect of the original proposals to the fore. Indeed, they pushed the idea of asking critical questions further than I had originally proposed – using this as the central device through which to organise the exhibition.⁵³ The decision to utilise questions, rather than categories, such as 'socialising production' or 'challenging authorship', was driven by a very genuine desire to engage the audience in an active dialogue, and to challenge them to think for themselves. Like my proposal for an openly subjective authorship, they were intended to clearly signify that the works on display were open to critical interrogation.⁵⁴ Hence, this objective was at least partially fulfilled, by a different means.

Both the exhibition and the accompanying publication – rebranded as a supplement rather than a catalogue – were ultimately conceptualised as a form of 'text book'.⁵⁵ However, despite the didactic or authoritarian impulse that this phrase suggests, the texts were offered as an open learning resource that the visitor could use in whatever way they chose.⁵⁶ The positioning of the introductory text as a *User Guide*, was another conscious reflection of this approach. As Francesco Manacorda explained, this careful phrasing was intended to signify, from the outset, that the viewer was expected to do some work of their own in navigating the exhibition and thinking

⁵³ It was Francesco Manacorda's idea to use the questions as the section titles.

⁵⁴ Artistic Director, Francesco Manacorda in an interview with Socialist periodical *Red Pepper*, made both the debt to my original proposal, and the Brechtian principles I embedded in it, explicit. He stated that: 'Brecht in-particular inspired our curatorial work and the way we constructed the exhibition. His theatrical technique of 'defamiliarisation' or 'distantiation'...We debated at our curatorial meetings how to translate these strategies into the display of the works, as well as in the construction of exhibition narrative, and we opted for two different principles: superficial incoherence amongst works in the same room and the prevalence of questions, over answers, in the wall texts'. See Danielle Child, 'Tate's Left Turn', *Red Pepper*, January 2014. Available online: <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/tates-left-turn/> (accessed 21/01/13).

⁵⁵ Francesco Manacorda proposed the idea of producing a supplement for this exhibition, as part of a broad agenda to replace the usual standard catalogue. He argued that the catalogue was, in reality, only useful as a coffee table status symbol, or for academics and curatorial peers requiring a full list of works. In this case, they could request the same information from the institution, if necessary. He felt that the catalogue form was outdated and too expensive to be a useful resource to the average visitor. In this sense, it was a democratising gesture. It offered a chronological timeline, of leftist art production, including many works that we could not include in the exhibition for one reason or another. It was, thus, also intended by Manacorda as a means of presenting all of the research that I had produced for the exhibition, including that which we could ultimately not include, in a form that was immediately comprehensible and easily digestible.

⁵⁶ Manacorda likens the exhibition to a textbook that visitors can use for their own learning. 'The catalogue incorporates a diary spanning the conception through to the exhibiting of the works, and works that are not included in the exhibition still make the cut. Also included is a 60-page visual essay – "a chronology with footnotes". Manacorda suggests that there are two ways of reading the research – one you take home and the other you experience in the exhibition. The viewer is left to make up their own mind about 'what's left?' See Danielle Child, 'Tate's Left Turn', *Red Pepper*, January 2014. Available online: <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/tates-left-turn/> (accessed 21/01/13).

through the problems posed:

Art Turning Left aims to 'activate the curiosity of our [the Tate's] public and get them to do some work as well, which I think is definitely in tune with the exhibition if you think of Bertolt Brecht's principle of the epic theatre'... The idea is to encourage people to really try to answer the questions by finding out about the work.⁵⁷

This emphasis on getting the audience to 'do some work', may have a hint of the protestant work ethic about it. However, it was not a patronising attempt to build the viewer's moral character through 'hard intellectual labour'. Rather, it was an attempt to encourage the audience to approach the display with an analytical and critical frame of mind.

My proposal to use incongruous juxtapositions as a device, which could defamiliarise the viewer with the work on display, was also retained and incorporated into the organising principle. Manacorda labelled this strategy 'superficial incoherence'. The use of questions was intended to work in tandem with this strategy to encourage a deeper intellectual engagement with the work. The curatorial team hoped to transform the viewer from passive recipient of information into an active agent in the interpretation and discussion of the material on display. However, poetic affect was not used to signify that there was an authorial intention (or a connection); nor a unity behind the apparent discord. It was adjudged that this would have mitigated the alienating effect, and signalled that we were only making arbitrary aesthetic connections between the works – the same criticism that we have seen was repeatedly directed against Documenta 12's aestheticising approach. This raised the question of whether the visitor would be stimulated enough to invest the time and effort needed to engage with the questions and the work, without the use of poetic 'affect' as a hook. Would people be able to make sense of an exhibition structured around incoherence, in order to critically engage with the work? Would the invitation, to engage in critical questions around the material, work to empower the viewer?

The decision to use questions, rather than categories, for the titles did, in Tate's view, work successfully as a means of snapping the viewer out of passive consumption of the

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

material.⁵⁸ Francesco Manacorda stated in our interview, that the exhibition was most, 'successful as an experimentation, and a way of breaking down the normal conventions of linear narratives... and the principles of coherence and proximity that normal exhibitions use'.⁵⁹ He argued that although the critical response of both public and peers was split down the middle – people loved it or hated it – 'even if people hated it, this was a sign that we were on to something in relation to how we were talking to the audience about the project'.⁶⁰ The negative reactions were a sign that we were challenging people and pushing them out of their comfort zone – asking them to think in a new way and become an active agent in their own learning. Moreover, he pointed out that it also allowed us 'to make some striking and even puzzling juxtapositions' that would have not been possible with a conventional organising principle.⁶¹

Moreover, Anna Cutler, Tate's Director of Learning, remarked that it provided a different model of learning and viewer engagement to the standard exhibitions produced by Tate and other public art institutions. She argues that such exhibitions tend to treat the exhibition as a consolidation of existing meaning, 'which takes the many and turns these into a singularity – the exhibition as a whole (synthesis)'.⁶² For Cutler, the use of questions in *Art Turning Left*, conversely managed to interweave both synthesis and its opposite – 'learning in which the singularity is turned in to the many, the range of interpretations and meanings' (analysis). This, in her view, rearticulated the exhibition as a more active form of knowledge production that continued to generate new meanings and new questions.

I liked that it asked a different question of the nature of an exhibition and the nature of learning (and when learning/ meaning-making is MEANT to 'happen' for people!) I liked that it blurred the boundaries of the two... I have been using it as a frame to think through that all-important messy midpoint when it's hard to see the difference and it's given me clarity!⁶³

⁵⁸ In particular, the idea of the 'active viewer', which was embedded in the work of the Neo-Impressionists, GRAV, OSPAAAL, the Situationists, and of course Bertolt Brecht's *War Primer*. The use of questions also made it clear that we were not making judgments about how well the work fulfilled the proposition. This meant that work such as the Folk Archive, which I originally did not agree should be included, could be employed less problematically as it was part of the process of questioning the idea of participation rather than being positioned as an exemplar of 'socialising production'.

⁵⁹ Interview with Francesco Manacorda, July 23, 2014, See Appendix Six.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Email correspondence with Anna Cutler, Tate, June 16, 2015.

⁶³ *ibid.*

With this Cutler, argues that *Art Turning Left* was a particularly useful experiment as it pointed a potential way forward to better integrating exhibitions with learning. This is for her the key to how public art museums should work in the future.⁶⁴

This approach chimed with both Tate Liverpool, and the wider Tate institution own counter-hegemonic agenda to reconsider their approach to in-gallery learning. Manacorda stated that he would consider applying the strategy of using questions again, alongside his own innovative and experimental non-linear approaches, to structuring future exhibitions and collection displays at Tate Liverpool. The structure that we adopted aligned with his broad mission for Tate, which was to develop new models of exhibition-making that functioned ‘less like a television programme and more like Wikipedia’, were ‘less a transmitter of existing knowledge and more a mechanism for people to write and produce knowledge’.⁶⁵ It, thus, did, crucially, succeed as a counter-hegemonic experiment, in the sense that it encouraged the institution to critically revisit its standard practices and provided a space for more experimental approaches to display and address. It proved that ‘antagonistic guests’ can help encourage experimentation in an existing institutional context. However, a lasting change to sedimented exhibition-making practices is only likely – *if*, crucially, this aligns with the existing counter-hegemonic agendas of the people that are able to push change forward.

But did it genuinely work to empower the viewer and constitute more critical subjects capable of questioning and subverting the neoliberal hegemony? There were two issues that I felt compromised these two central objectives. Firstly, I had argued that, if our organising principle made it imperative that the audience had to ‘do work’, it was essential to provide the appropriate information and critical tools for the viewer. This was particularly important because neither the making process nor the political views of the artists were necessarily discernible in the work itself. Yet, the majority of the contextualizing objects, visuals and texts that I had deemed necessary to frame the work as a political practice were forsaken in the final display. Secondly, the final phrasing of the questions did not reflect the integrity of my original research.

⁶⁴ Interview with Francesco Manacorda, July 23, 2014, See Appendix Six.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*



Fig. 78. Installation Photograph of the section entitled 'How can art speak with a collective voice', showing the small display of the Neo-Impressionists work and the display tables given over to the Martha Rosler display. © Tate, photograph Roger Sinek

In the exhibition — even where artists or collectives were little known — there was very limited textual information or contextual material. This decision was made on the grounds that too much explanatory information would delimit the viewer's interpretative agency and be too tiring and demanding for the viewer.⁶⁶ The display of Neo-Impressionist work was, for example, reduced to one painting, and one colour chart, that could not possibly elucidate the connection between their development of a scientifically-derived methodology and their Anarchist-Communist position on collective practice.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ However, the exhibition supplement was made available throughout the exhibition, providing a short introductory essay, an expanded chronological visual timeline of the art included in the exhibition and additional examples of leftist art production, with short footnotes with further information about each work.

⁶⁷ Perversely, given the curatorial teams insistence that the viewer would not be interested or engage in large amounts of contextual material, half of the section that featured the Neo-Impressionists' (or more accurately, the Neo-Impressionist) work, was given over to a colossal archival display of the Martha Rosler project *If We Lived Here*, which Manacorda retrospectively acknowledged did little to help articulate the overall concept of the exhibition. I had argued that this work should only be included if there was a separate section on exhibition-making practices. It covered one wall and took up six display tables, taking up most of the floor space in the room. Interview with Francesco Manacorda, 23rd July 2014, Tate Liverpool.



Fig. 79. Installation view of the selection of Bauhaus works included in *Art Turning Left*, showing the single ninety word caption to the left of the work. Photograph taken by the author. © Tate, photograph Lynn Wray

The negative impact of this reluctance to contextualise can also be illustrated by the display of Bauhaus works.⁶⁸ To draw out the politics behind the Bauhaus works, I had proposed that there must be a small archival display about the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* (*Workers Council for Art*) – the socialist organisation through which Gropius developed the original *Bauhaus Idea*. However, these critical contextual objects were readily sacrificed from the display to make room for more finished art objects.⁶⁹ I had also proposed that an extended caption should be included, containing an extract from Walter Gropius' first Bauhaus manifesto, where he clearly sets out the framework in terms of socialist values. Moreover, I had proposed that the individual works' captions should be used to draw out the importance of 'craft processes' to the Bauhaus, even where objects were ultimately intended for industrial production.

Ultimately, a single ninety-word caption accompanied the whole display of work, which failed to connect the work back to the awkwardly phrased question that framed

⁶⁸ See Appendix 1b for the full proposal and rationale for a display based on Gropius' Bauhaus Idea.

⁶⁹ Frederic J. Schwarz, *Wilhelm Wagenfeld and Carl Jakob Jucker: Table Lamp. 1923-24*, in Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman (Ed.), *Bauhaus: Workshops for Modernity*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2009, pp.138-141

the section – *Can Art Affect Everyone?* – or to Gropius’s leftist political intentions. Phrases like: ‘while recognising the importance of handcraft, Bauhaus designers also worked with industrial technologies so that their objects could be easily mass-produced’, presented the idea of handicraft as an afterthought – something considered, but far from essential to the development of their working processes. This display, therefore, articulated nothing about Gropius’ political intentions in retaining craft processes, or about our intention in including these works in the exhibition.

In-gallery observations and recorded visitor comments affirmed that the lack of contextual and archival information undermined, to some extent, the success of the strategy of using questions. The comments indicated that the strategy of combining incongruous juxtapositions with direct questions, did work to stimulate critical thinking. For example, one visitor kindly described it as ‘the most interesting, thought-provoking exhibition ever’ and another stated that it, ‘really made me think’.⁷⁰ Indeed, by far the most consistent comment about the exhibition was that it was ‘thought-provoking’. However, others stated that they found the exhibition incoherent and difficult to follow. For example, one visitor commented: ‘I found the display and interpretation (sic) to be completely impenetrable’, and others stated that the lack of information, and, in particular, the lack of translations of foreign texts, made the exhibition ‘ironically, quite elitist’ or ‘very exclusive (as in non-inclusive)’.⁷¹

Head of Learning, Lindsey Fryer, reflected that the audience feedback, and the reactions recorded by the Visitor Assistants, indicated that the lack of information delimited our ambitions of increasing the critical agency of the viewer. She stated:

The strategy of asking questions in conversational language does not seem to have alleviated the issues of inaccessibility for many people. It is clear that it did work in moving visitors out of their comfort zone as passive receivers of information of someone else's interpretation of ideas and art works. However, we expected visitors to feel able to use the questions as starting point for

⁷⁰ *Art Turning Left Visitor Comments*, Tate Liverpool, November, December, January and February 2014. (See Appendix Five).

⁷¹ Interesting exhibition but, ironically, quite elitist (language barrier because no French, Russian, German etc.). Also the only one of the current exhibitions that is not free!" *Art Turning Left Visitor Comments*, Tate Liverpool, January 2014 The Art Turning Left exhibition felt very exclusive (as in non-inclusive). No translations of different languages used in art works meant that I've come away with no increase in understanding of the art of other countries. I have a PHD in literature so I grasped the concepts expressed in the blurb on the walls. Not The Art Turning Left exhibition felt very exclusive (as in non-inclusive). No translations of different languages used in art works meant that I've come away with no increase in understanding of the art of other countries. I have a PHD in literature so I grasped the concepts expressed in the blurb on the walls. Not sure I would have understood if I'd had less education. Overall, it seemed elitist - surely at odds with the whole theme of the exhibition?" (See Appendix 5).

investigating the concept of the exhibition and art works for themselves and to provoke discussions in the gallery and beyond. This did happen to a degree but as many visitors who commented felt they needed more information and knowledge by which to navigate the concept of the show and the art works. From our experience the questions posed within the exhibition sections often left visitors wanting more discussion or information.⁷²

This also, therefore, indicates that I overestimated the audience's ability to understand challenging political concepts. It suggests, however, that developing more inventive visual interpretation strategies could have been a viable solution. This could have enabled people to critically engage with the material, without spoon-feeding them a preordained authoritarian response, or bombarding them with too much text.⁷³

The curatorial and learning team was responsible for the final phrasing of the questions. Although I was invited to offer critical feedback, the decisions were taken, ultimately, by the institution-based staff, in relation to their audience development drivers. Their choices were based on an informed judgment about what constituted accessible enough language for a 'general audience'. Head of Learning, Lindsey Fryer, explained that, in this particular exhibition, the complexity of the ideas meant it was particularly critical to provide 'clear accessible information that relate ideas and art works and... allow for visitors new to concepts, artists and themes'.⁷⁴ There was a concern that the ideas were too complex, and that, if such ideas were framed using 'academic' language, we would run the danger of alienating a non-expert audience. As a consequence of trying to ensure the language employed was immediately accessible to every possible visitor, the final questions chosen did not correlate well with the original groupings of works, formulated from my research. They were much broader and employed more generic terminology than those posed in my research.

There were particularly intense discussions about proposed sections provisionally entitled 'How to combat alienation?' and 'How to democratise art production?' These centred on whether or not the term 'alienation' constituted accessible language.⁷⁵ As

⁷² Email interview with Lindsey Fryer, 27th March 2014. See Appendix 6.

⁷³ Fryer suggested, in hindsight, taking each of the questions as a starting point for a series of public debates that could have been filmed and shown in the gallery, and online, throughout the period of the show. Email interview with Lindsey Fryer, 27th March 2014. See Appendix 6.

⁷⁴ Email interview with Lindsey Fryer, 27th March 2014. See Appendix 6.

⁷⁵ Lindsey Fryer reflected that it was the political usage of the term, rather than the term itself, that was the issue: 'I don't think that any idea or term is too difficult for the public or the exhibition medium to incorporate. If I remember, using the word '

the concept was fundamental to the history of leftist art production, I argued that we must use it for the title. We could, after all, explain the Marxist sense in accessible language in the introductory text. Although it is not an everyday concept, the fact that Marx's writings have persuaded millions of working people around the world to take up the Communist cause, is proof that a non-expert or non-academic audience can quickly grasp what alienation means. In a city like Liverpool, with a strong political and intellectual working class culture, to not use the term would be to patronise the audience.

Eventually the problem of semantics was sidestepped completely by the formation of a new section posing the question: 'Can pursuing equality change how art is made?' This missed the central problem that artists such as Pinot-Gallizio and William Morris were trying to combat. Their issue was not inequality as such, but rather, how the reduction in creative and intellectual agency, brought about by the division of labour, separated people from their essential humanity. The problem of 'alienation' cannot be conflated with the problem of 'equality of access' – they are two completely different things.⁷⁶ Surely it would have been better to accurately articulate a difficult concept, and develop a means of explaining it effectively, than to curate to a benchmark artificially lower than the 'lowest common denominator'? Where a concept such as 'alienation' is so key to understanding why artists produced and distributed their work in particular ways, it is essential to introduce this to an audience. Not doing so would close off one important avenue of understanding art.

Moreover, the phrasing of the questions did not provide the 'choice between two clearly defined alternatives' that Mouffe declares to be the essence of 'properly political questions'. The strategy of using questions did seem to encourage a much greater degree of engagement with the works. The Visitor Assistants reported that viewers spent a much longer period of time with the exhibits, than in comparable

alienation' in the context that it was proposed was an issue. It's a perennial problem, as you say. In my view, it isn't the term or the word that's the problem, but how we are using it and why, in any given context'. Email interview with Lindsey Fryer, 27th March 2014. See Appendix 6.

⁷⁶ Interestingly, the group did, ultimately, decide that the term 'alienation' could be used as part of the introductory text, rather than in the title. Referencing William Morris' practice, they stated in the extended wall panel: 'Morris structured the production of his iconic fabrics to counteract the alienation many workers felt following the industrial revolution'. However, if it is possible to use the term 'alienation' in this context, it makes little sense that it was not used for the title of the section.

exhibitions.⁷⁷ However, the imprecise phrasing of these questions effectively depoliticised them.⁷⁸ Neringa Cerniauskaitė, reviewing the exhibition for Mousse Magazine, perfectly encapsulated the problem with this when she argued:

Perhaps the “chapters” of the exhibition posed in the form of questions could be seen as invitations to search for the answers outside the walls of the museum? I took one with me. It seemed to respond to the current situation in the most relevant way: *Are there ways to distribute art differently?* The left-wing values have vanished in this question. Let’s hope that doesn’t mean *with* this question.⁷⁹

She makes the point that the de-politicised phrasing of the question could render it impotent as a tool to engender political thinking, and revivify the radical leftist project. If the accompanying text does not provide a political rationale for why the artist might desire to distribute art differently, it leads to a simple yes or no response. It should have indicated what is thought wrong with the art market and addressed the question of why leftist artists specifically seek to bypass the present distribution and exchange channels. As it stood, it represented a failure to heed Chantal Mouffe’s warning about the danger of articulating politics through a moral or aesthetic register; that it disconnects people from the ‘proper political thinking’ needed to challenge the structural conditions that serve to reproduce inequalities.⁸⁰

Despite my best efforts to develop an alternative approach, *Art Turning Left* ironically mirrored the contemporary trend of decentering, or negating, curatorial authorship in the name of the active viewer. Mouffe argues that the exhibition must not simply disarticulate existing practices but, rather, offer that crucial moment of rearticulation, if it is to stimulate a collective will for change that could challenge the neoliberal hegemony. The idea of organising the work around pivotal questions could have provided an alternative path to the partisan authorship that WHW took with the 11th Istanbul Biennial, which was adjudged incompatible with the demand of impartiality

⁷⁷ Visitor Experience and Audiences Meeting, Tate Liverpool, Wednesday 5th February 2014.

⁷⁸ It should be acknowledged that I was part of the team devising these questions and though I did not agree with the choices, I was unable to propose more precise alternatives that Tate felt would be accessible to the visitor.

⁷⁹ Neringa Cerniauskaitė, ‘Review: Art Turning Left: How Values Changed Making 1789-2013’ in Mousse Magazine, issue 41, January 2014, p.5.

⁸⁰ Mouffe repeatedly makes this point. For example, in an article for the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Politics, she states: The problem with this conflation of politics with morality is that it forecloses the possibility of posing what are the fundamental questions that a left-wing politics must address, those linked to the transformations of the key power relations in society and with the conditions for the establishment of a new hegemony. See: Chantal Mouffe, ‘Why the left needs a political adversary not a moral enemy’, *European Institute for Progressive Cultural Politics*, website, January 2001. Accessed 12/07/2015

placed on Tate as a national institution. However, the problem with this strategy of using questions, employed as it was in *Art Turning Left*, was that we were asking the audience to think about how the work is produced and disseminated, and this was not actually visible or lisible in the work itself, in most cases. The strategy of combining minimal amounts of explanatory and contextual interpretation, combined with ‘superficial incoherence’, became suspiciously like the appeals to the active reader that we saw in Chapter Two.

Although the attempt to eschew curatorial narrative was much less extreme than at the 29th Sao Paulo Bienal, for example, it was still confusing to much of the audience. Visitor comments, such as ‘there was no discernible flow or story to the exhibition’, suggested that it was simply too disjointed for people to engage with, without more signposting. One individual stated: ‘thought provoking in places but not at all easy to follow and sadly uninformative about the peoples struggle – let’s hope the left has a clearer image than this portrayed’.⁸¹ Others actively suggested that a chronological model would have made it easier for them to understand the overriding concept.⁸²

In our retrospective analysis of the exhibition, both myself and Francesco Manacorda came to the same conclusion: we believed a stronger approach would have been a combination of my two original proposals for the organising principle (the episodic and ‘epic agonism’). This would have involved three rooms which posed questions and contained different artists’ responses to these questions, much as they did in the final exhibition. However, these rooms would have been interspersed with three focussed episodic displays that concentrated on one particular artist or collective’s response. This would have allowed the space for, for example, a display of Pinot Gallizio’s work that *did* contain all of the documentary photographs of his working processes and extracts from his texts that made clear that he was aiming to combat alienation. It would have given the visitor a chance to gain a detailed understanding of one response

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² One visitor, for example, made this suggestion explicitly when they stated: An interesting exhibition (potentially) struggling to emerge from an incoherent muddled exhibition. Needed better curation - i.e. organise chronologically (development of left ideas and movements)’. Another observed: Ideally the exhibition should be presented in chronological order to make a bold statement’. *Art Turning Left Visitor Comments*, Tate Liverpool, December and January 2014

to the question posed that they could then use to compare with and against the other examples on display.⁸³

4.3 Did the exhibition position art as a production process?

The originality of my proposal for *What's Left?* lay in its focus on the political intent behind the production and distribution processes that artists have employed, rather than the content of the final art object. It sought to position art as a production process; making visible the processes of art production and the mechanisms by which it is displayed, distributed and exchanged. By stressing the similarities between art making and other forms of production, I aimed to demystify art objects — situating them as things made rather than divined. I also aimed to open up the possibility of creative, non-alienated labour, beyond the professional artist, by featuring art by lay artists and offering opportunities for making in the gallery space. My proposed mode of installation was intended to present art-making as a socially valuable creative and intellectual process that everyone can gain from participating in – a part of everyone's everyday culture. Testing out this new model, however, depended on Tate Liverpool being willing to curate against the sanctified status of the professional art object and move away from their tried and tested 'white cube' mode of installation.

Early in the curatorial process, the general idea of making the processes of production as visible as possible, in the display, was, somewhat surprisingly, accepted. As the curatorial process developed, this principle was utilised to propose focused selections of work for each artist or collective, which met with little resistance from the curatorial team. For example, there was no argument made against my proposal to reproduce and enlarge Equipo 57's diagrammatic drawings, which set out their complex methodology, as a wall vinyl. Because the proposed section addressed how scientifically derived 'objective' methodologies for collective practice had been developed by different groups of artists, the idea was to bring these methodologies to the fore and position them on an equal footing with the final art object. It was also agreed that it would be interesting to commission an illustrator to produce a graphic novel style series of drawings that would visually communicate the working process of the collective, and be reproduced as vinyls for display, alongside the work. However,

⁸³Interview with Francesco Manacorda, July 23, 2014, See Appendix Six.

this apparent resolve to make ‘making’ visible in the space never materialised. The display of Equipo 57’s work, for example, consisted of nine gouache paintings for the film *Interactividad Cine I*, and the film itself — evenly and generously spaced on white walls. There were no diagrams, no illustrations, no sketches, no manifestos, no context and no explanation that the paintings were produced specifically for the film, rather than existing as an autonomous work. This object-centric display was mirrored throughout the exhibition.



Fig. 80. Installation Photograph of Equipo 57's work 'Interactividad Cine I', 1957 and 'Banco', 1961, in Art Turning Left, Tate Liverpool, 2013-14. © Tate, photograph Roger Sinek

On entering the exhibition for the first time, it was striking that despite my counter-hegemonic ambitions, it looked remarkably similar to any other exhibition produced at Tate. The presentation followed the ‘white cube’ model. The walls were white. The floors were grey. The windows that looked out to the Albert Dock and the River Mersey were blacked out to protect the large number of works on paper, obscuring views of the wider world, and focusing attention inwards, to the material at hand. The lighting was artificial, though not necessarily auratic, perhaps even a little dull in all but the central room. It looked professional and slick, as befitted Tate’s stature as the principle provider of modern and contemporary art. Everything was – in a phrase –

‘business as usual’: what one would expect to encounter upon visiting the Tate. The biggest departure from my proposed exhibition was that the display was comprised, almost solely, of finished art objects. I had clearly failed to persuade the curatorial team to situate art *as a production process*.

When we began to position work within a mock-up of the gallery, the lack of space became more apparent and it became increasingly difficult to persuade the curatorial team of the importance of ‘making’ being visible. When objects needed to be edited due to limitations of space or budget, items proposed specifically to making production processes visible were, conspicuously, first off the list. This process happened gradually, but so consistently that when the final list of works was confirmed it became immediately evident that almost every contextualising object that elucidated the production of the work had dropped off the list.



Fig. 81. Installation photograph, showing the final display of William Morris's work. There are two archival photograph (one showing Morris in his working smock and one of Morris posing with the Hammersmith Socialist Society), the working drawing and the woodblock for the Rose and Thistle wallpaper, and a shop stand, explaining why it is important to invest in quality. Photograph Lynn Wray

The failure to make 'making' visible in the display compromised both the legibility of the exhibition concept and the realisation of my counter-hegemonic aims. Though I had argued, for example, that it was absolutely essential to make visible the meticulous craftsmanship and painstaking technical research behind William Morris's work, the curatorial team rejected the idea of actually showing the labour process unfold through either the video, photographs or interviews of craftspeople engaged in producing Morris's work.⁸⁴ The final installation did, at least, include the intricately carved woodblocks and working drawings that he produced alongside the final roll of *Rose and Thistle* Wallpaper. The audience comments showed that people enjoyed seeing the craftsmanship in the original wood block. However, because the display focused solely on the objects of Morris's labour *as art*, it was difficult to get across how the level of skill and attention to detail required to produce the work, was related to his socialist vision of combating alienation in wider production.

A similar fate befell the relatively straightforward archival presentation proposed to accompany the display of one of Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio's 'Industrial Paintings'. Despite having secured access to the original photographs in the Pinot-Gallizio archive, in Turin, that were essential to demonstrate his performative and ludic strategies, the curatorial team decided to present only the final art object. Although the work had been relocated to the section based around alternative distribution strategies, it was still important to show the process of cutting up the painting, as the idea of selling it 'by the metre' was as much a part of 'the work' as the completed roll of painting. These photographs recording the working process were particularly important, as their distribution through magazines and journals was an integral part of Pinot-Gallizio's practice. The final installation of the work – isolated at the very end of the exhibition with nothing but a 'do not touch' barrier to frame it – rendered it impotent and uninspiring. The fleeting radicalism of the strategies he developed could have been better articulated in a single photograph, than through the art object itself.

⁸⁴ I had proposed that we include the photo story, interviews and videos of craftsmen in the Sanderson's factory that had originally been produced for the ICA exhibition *William Morris Today*, a digitised version of the Wardle pattern books in which Morris annotated his technical research into dyes and materials, I also argued for the inclusion of a facsimile copy of Morris' key text *Useful Work versus Useless Toil* and a large-scale vinyl illustration be commissioned to make the connection between Morris's socialist values and his production methods explicit.



Fig. 82 (Left) Installation Photograph showing the final presentation of Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio's work in Art Turning Left. © Tate, photograph Roger Sinek Fig. 83. (Right) Archival photograph showing Pinot Gallizio cutting up one of his Industrial Paintings for sale by the metre, reproduced with the kind permission of Archivio Giuseppe-Pinot Gallizio, Turin, Italy.

Illustrator Rachel Gannon was commissioned to produce the narrative drawings proposed to visualise the working processes of key works. However, they were ultimately confined to the supplementary publication, because budgetary limitations prevented them being reproduced as vinyls. The material efficiency, by which these drawings communicated the central tenets of Morris's practice, for example, demonstrated just how effective a creative visual approach to interpretation could have been. Although there was clear enthusiasm expressed about the prospect of commissioning an illustrator, in this case, the lack of investment is emblematic of another false hierarchy that pervades the thinking in public art institutions. This, in turn, effects how art is situated, installed and interpreted. The desire to position art as distinct from other creative visual disciplines, and, thus, protect its value and status, leads to a general reluctance to enlist the help of illustrators, graphic designers and craftspeople in the visual interpretation and presentation of stories about art.⁸⁵ The perception that such work interferes with the unique aesthetic experience of art is clearly mistaken. Art is never created to exist in a social and visual vacuum – it is always created and continues to exist in a mediated visual context.

⁸⁵ One of the curatorial team's principle concerns about my proposals was whether certain works constituted 'art' or should instead be classified as 'visual culture' craft or graphic design, which in their view would make their inclusion redundant. This question was raised for the work of William Morris, the Suffragette Atelier, the Bauhaus and the Institute for Figuring's *Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef* project. Although William Morris and the Bauhaus were readily accepted as relevant inclusions, the work of the Suffragette Atelier and the Institute for Figuring's project were not. The obvious distinction between these two bodies of work was that these second two projects were conceived and realised by women. Although, gender was not stated as a reason behind the curatorial team's decision, craft is often perceived when produced by women as a hobby rather than as a highly-skilled professional competence. The Institute for Figuring's project was, for example, excluded specifically on the grounds that it was not conceived and framed as art, however, although the project was initiated by an institute primarily concerned with expanding the public's understanding of science, it was developed specifically as a collective art project that from a Marxist-feminist perspective interrogated the denigration of craft and traditional women's skills such as crochet, through the application of an explicitly rational and scientific methodology. Accordingly the project had been shown in several art galleries including the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh and the Hayward Gallery, London.

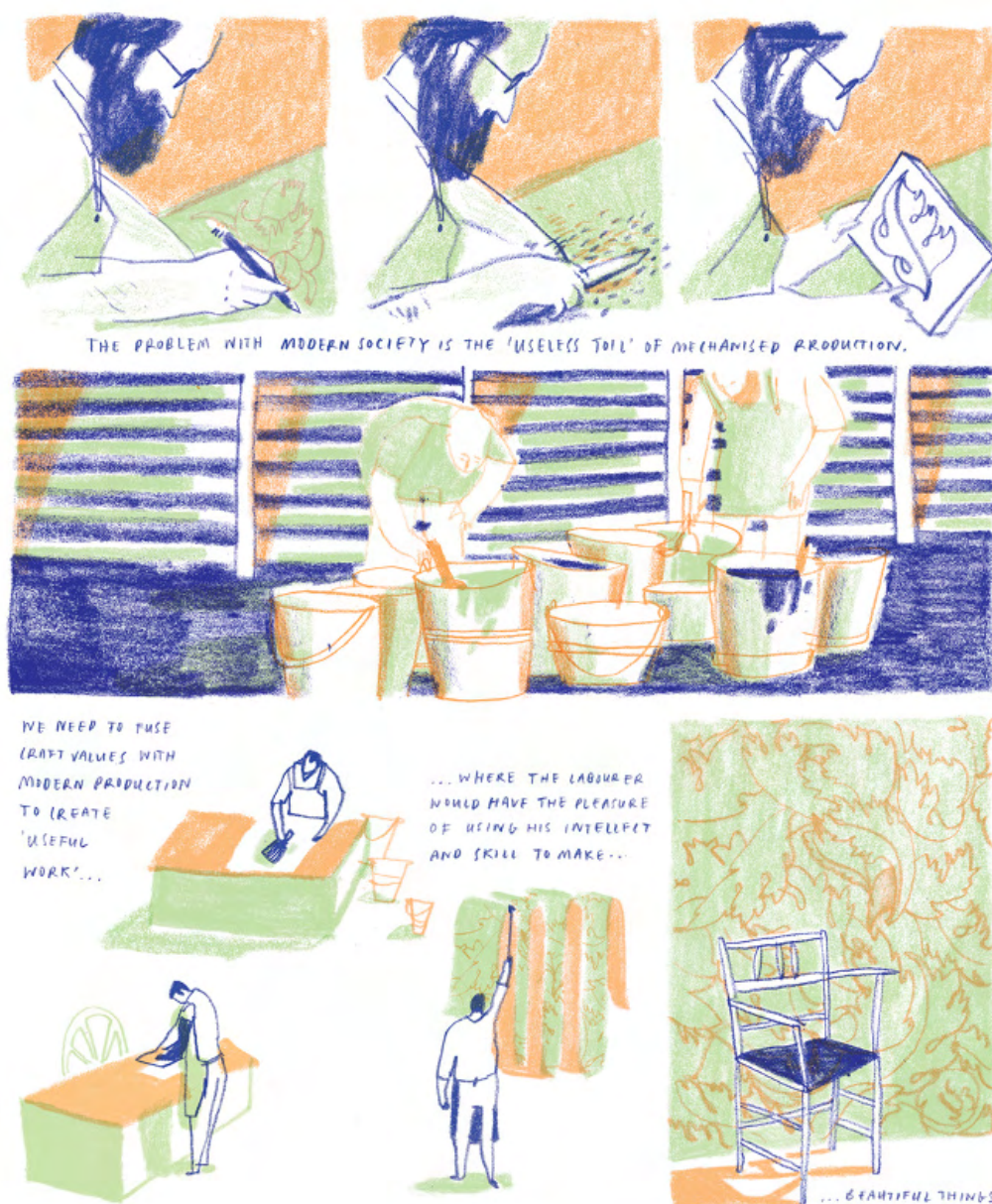


Fig. 84. Illustration of William Morris's production process as featured in 'Art Turning Left' publication (Tate Liverpool, 2013). Illustration by Rachel Gannon.

I cannot definitively say why the curatorial team rejected my proposals to make the production processes of the art as visible as possible, in the display. Although I was present at the majority of the curatorial team meetings, and my research led the selection and framing of work, I was not always party to the final decisions, and I was not involved in the final hang of the exhibition. Nobody explicitly opposed or argued against the principle of situating art as a production process – on the contrary, everyone outwardly supported this broad objective. The decisions about each individual work were presented as pragmatic and rational judgments, made on a case-by-case basis. However, the reversion to a 'white cube' hang was so complete it suggests that there was something deeply engrained in the institutional thinking and

practices that prevented them from 'showing the general public how its goods are made'.⁸⁶ The subtext of our curatorial discussions suggested to me that there was a deep-seated and implicit institutional need to set art apart from other forms of production, and protect its status as a separate 'ontological category'. This desire to separate art from other forms of cultural productions conflicted with the ideological imperative of much of the work presented in *Art Turning Left*.

An interview with Lindsey Fryer affirmed that there were no pragmatic or constitutional reasons why we could not have situated art as a production process. Indeed, she stated that from her perspective, 'where this approach is taken - sketch books/writings/personal artefacts etc. visitors are highly engaged'.⁸⁷ However, Francesco Manacorda, declared retrospectively that he felt that showing art as a production process would have 'invalidated the radical way of showing the final end for people to work out the reasons'.⁸⁸ He wanted to present the production process as a riddle for the visitor to solve by looking at and thinking about the work. An idea which chimes with the constructivist methodology Tate Liverpool currently employ. However, as I have previously argued, in many case, this simply would not have been possible as the rationale for the choice of process or the making process itself was rarely discernible by looking at the object as a standalone entity.

In any case, it is clear in retrospect just how difficult it would have been to disrupt the steadfast but naturalised adherence to conventional object-centrism at this, or almost any other collection-holding institution. After all, their central remit is to care for and showcase the objects that they hold. Object-centrism is also absolutely ingrained in the curatorial process. Because the process of securing loan objects for temporary exhibition projects is so complex, so lengthy and so unpredictable, it generally has to be initiated at least two years prior to an exhibitions opening. The loan request process thus often starts before the curatorial team has had chance to really focus on the exhibition in question and agree upon a coherently defined organising principle,

⁸⁶ William Morris (1884) *A Factory As It Might Be*. First published in *Justice*, April-May 1884.

⁸⁷ Fryer states: 'I personally have no issue with revealing and debating artistic process and production... There is no policy on showing only finished art works by professional artists. As we hold the National Collection and our remit is to show this to as wide an audience as possible, but we also have a vast archive of material that can also be shown. In terms of loans in we also may have access to other material that could reveal processes and production'. See: Email interview with Lindsey Fryer, 27th March 2014 in Appendix 6.

⁸⁸ Interview with Francesco Manacorda, July 23, 2014, See Appendix Six.

installation or interpretation strategy.⁸⁹ A curatorial process for a retrospective survey exhibition containing historic works, thus, begins with a frantic rush to secure key objects and define a full list of works, without necessarily having an overriding framework or a clear steer on how these objects will be structured and presented to the viewer or integrated with a wider public programme.

The exhibition is therefore initially defined as a list of objects, rather than a visual-spatial-temporal experience. It continues to be thought through and talked about in this way, because shipping, insurance and conservation issues necessarily dominate the curatorial workload and the budget, when dealing with historical works. The curatorial process thus naturally leads people to envisage art as object, and to orientate their displays in ways that reinforce this concept. Moreover, the higher status objects tend to be more sought after and, thus, have to be requested earlier. As they are already secured, these objects are inevitably the ones retained if demands of space or budget come into play. Contextual material, manifestos, posters, craft and design objects, are less hard to secure, and are, thus normally, requested later, and, as such, become more vulnerable. A hierarchy is unconsciously established from the outset that privileges final art objects, and serves to reproduce the dominant orthodoxy.

Similarly, despite the group being extremely supportive of the general concept, none of the ideas, I had proposed for live making in the gallery space, were realised. I had invited the learning team into curatorial discussions at the earliest stage, in order to help cement the importance of creating an integrated installation and interpretation strategy and to discuss how a shift in emphasis from object to process could be

⁸⁹ The Neo-Impressionists serve as a case in point to illustrate the unpredictability and sometimes arbitrary nature of the loan-in process and how far this impacts on the final form and structure of the exhibition beyond the curatorial team's immediate control. One of the first actions agreed upon was to request key Neo-Impressionist works, as it was known that out of everything on our long list, these would likely to be the most difficult objects to secure. We requested a number of prominent works by Paul Signac, Maximilien Luce and Henri Edmund Cross from European and American public art institutions but were initially only able to secure a single work – Signac's *In the Time of Harmony*. Reasons given ranged from the fact that an important retrospective of Luce's work was scheduled for the same time as the exhibition, and the works had already been committed to this show, to a declaration that a prominent American capitalist, wished to keep one of his favourite works in his home city for the last few years of his life. The objects which I had proposed to help focus the viewer's attention on the development of their collective divisionist methodology, their cooperative gallery and their commitment to wider distribution through print media (particularly through Anarchist-Communist affiliated periodicals) were thus put on the backburner until we knew whether we were going to be able to secure enough final art works to constitute an effective display. We were finally able to secure a work by Luce, *L'acédie* (1895), but unfortunately at the last minute the Signac work, used in much of the marketing material of the exhibition, was withdrawn as it transpired that it was officially classed as a French monument and the requisite paperwork had not been sent and completed. In the end only the single Luce work was displayed alongside the chemist Michel Eugène Chevreul's, atlas of colour contrast (*De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs*, 1839).

achieved.⁹⁰ For example, the proposal for a live, and gradually unfolding, production of a mural relating to the *International Team of Plastic Artists'* work for the Mexican Electrician's Syndicate, was never followed up.⁹¹ Conservation and health and safety restrictions were cited as reasons for not following through on these proposals, rather than any ideological opposition to the general idea of allowing making in the gallery space. It was deemed impossible to have 'wet' materials in the gallery space. The decision not to situate a screen-printing press in the gallery space, where visitors could produce their own versions of the Atelier Populaire's posters, was justified in these terms. Tate Liverpool have included participatory live making in the gallery space in the past, such as screen-printing T-Shirts during the opening night of *The Fifth Floor* (Tate Liverpool, 16 December 2008 – 1 February 2009). However, this exhibition was different because it included historical and high-value works. Strict conservation rules, in the terms and conditions of the loan agreements, stipulate that ink and other 'wet' substances were not permitted in the gallery space.

The possibility of putting double doors on one of the rooms in the gallery space, to create a quarantined zone, was briefly muted, but never seriously considered due to financial restrictions. Tate would have had to pay for custom-made doors to be installed and employ someone to maintain the press, help members of the public to make the prints and to ensure that ink did not leave that specific room. As Manacorda, notes this would have 'wiped out half the transport budget'.⁹² However, it is still important to acknowledge that featuring live making in an exhibition was not absolutely impossible and, thus, not including it still constitutes a curatorial decision. In budgetary terms it would have necessitated a clear decision in the early stages to sacrifice some of the final art objects and only loan-in work from British collections. Whilst, as I argued in Chapter Three, using Triple Candie's practice as an example, we could have sidestepped the conservation restrictions by using reproductions of original art objects in innovative ways. It is also important to point out that the budgets

⁹⁰ Antoinette McKane argues that when the learning team are involved from the very beginning of a project or when the concept is conceived as a collaboration between the two departments, then the institution tends to be more open in its definition of art and more experimental with its approach to installation and interpretation. It was also important to engage the Learning Team at the earliest stage as both the standard Tate approach to interpretation texts and their own unique constructivist 'ways of looking' methodology are also basically object-centric as the final art work is held up as the object of inquiry – it becomes the 'thing' that the viewer can attach their own meaning to, and is as such still an object-focused approach.

⁹¹ I also proposed in these meetings that they invite artist Ruth Ewan to run a Socialist Sunday School, within the gallery space for local school children and that they invite Olivier Plender to help facilitate a Kibbo Kraft camp with Tate Collective.

⁹² Email correspondence, 17th December 2015.

allocated for shipping, interpretation, marketing and public programmes are not set in stone and a case could have been made for them to be shifted, reallocated or renegotiated, if the focus on situating art as a production process was agreed as the main priority. Though this still presents a choice, on balance, the curatorial team felt it was not in the public interest to compromise the safety of other works, or to so significantly deplete the budget, in order to push this single idea forward. Whilst locating either project in the Wolfson room was also possible, it was not fully considered because taking over that space for the exhibition would have contradicted Manacorda's new innovative 'magazine' format for the gallery.⁹³ In retrospect, it is clear that in this particular exhibition it would have made better sense to sacrifice final art objects, where the shipping and insurance costs were prohibitively high, in order to allow investment in the development of alternative and experimental approaches to visual communication.

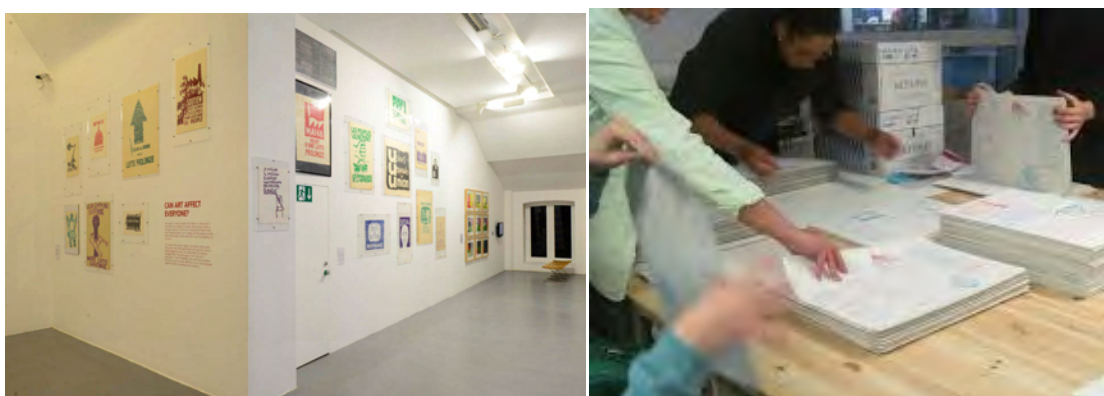


Fig. 85. (Left) Installation shot of the final Atelier Populaire installation in Art Turning Left. © Tate, photograph Roger Sinek. Fig 86. (Right) Tate Collective assembling and binding their booklet 'You Feel Like a Threat Don't You?' in the Office for Useful Art © Tate.

The proposal to create a reconstruction of the Ashington Group's hut, as an art-making studio and informal space for discussion and debate, similarly never got off the ground. The *Office for Useful Art* was presented by the curatorial team as an alternative to embedding a multi-functional space for making, talking and learning in the gallery. The public programme for *The Office* included limited opportunities, for the visitor to observe live making or participate in ad hoc and organised making activities.⁹⁴ *The*

⁹³ The curatorial team could find no other satisfactory solution to the problem of loaning and shipping final works by the Mexican Muralists and it was decided that there was no point in including a projection of the final mural, preparatory drawings, the documents outlining the working process or the photographs or photomontages that I had uncovered in the IVAM archive and The Siqueiros archive in Mexico City.

⁹⁴ The programme was developed by the Head of Learning at Tate Liverpool, Lindsey Fryer in collaboration with Grizedale Arts and LJMU, but an open call was also put out for proposals for local groups to use the space in whatever way they wished.

Office was furnished with a table that visitors could use to take rubbings and create their own political wallpaper. It was also used for an event called *Remodelling Disparity*, where visitors were invited to use simple materials to produce 3D models that visualised global inequalities.⁹⁵ Tate Collective Liverpool, a group of creatives aged 15-25, who programme activities for other young people, also used the space every Saturday to assemble, collate and bind together their booklet, *You Feel Like a Threat Don't You?*⁹⁶

The photograph originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The image was sourced at: <http://www.grizedale.org/blogs/blog/8887/the-office-of-useful-art.1>

Fig. 87. *The Office For Useful Art, in Art Turning Left* (Alistair Hudson talking with Chto Delat? and MA Fine Art Students from Liverpool John Moores University).

The workshops, organised by the Worker's Education Association (WEA,) that used the exhibition to explore the history of radical art seemed particularly reflective of my original proposal for the Ashington hut.⁹⁷ Unfortunately, in the WEA sessions, no making actually took place. Indeed, outside of the pre-planned solitary workshop

⁹⁵ The space was also used by artists to produce new work which visitors could see unfold. For example, Christopher Kulendran Thomas, used the space to film a collaboration with a group of Sri Lankan actors, as part of his long-term project of establishing a globally networked platform for participatory filmmaking based on Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre methodology. For more on this project see: Interview with Young Gods' Artist, Christopher Kulendran Thomas, Aesthetica Magazine Website, Posted 30 January 2013, <http://www.aestheticamagazine.com/interview-with-young-gods-christopher-kulendran-thomas/> accessed 12/07/2015.

⁹⁶ Tate Collective are a group of 15-25 year olds who plan and programme events for other young people in collaboration with Tate Liverpool curators. This booklet was produced in collaboration with artist Ruth Ewan and design collective, Abäke

⁹⁷ The Ashington Group was formed after meeting at WEA art history classes.

already mentioned, there was little attempt to engage visitors in making activities. I didn't observe a single visitor making art in the space, or using the table to make rubbings, although I did see several groups using *The Office* as a teaching and learning resource. Thus, although it was also touted as a space for art-making, the emphasis was firmly on discourse. As Lindsey Fryer acknowledged, the multi-functional space operated in a different way than was anticipated, existing 'somewhere between an artwork and a public space for dialogue'.⁹⁸ Fryer also noted that though they aimed to have someone to welcome visitors in the space at all times, this did not work to mitigate people's fear about interacting with the space.⁹⁹ The direct observation of visitors approaching the space, indicated that people were uncertain about what the space was for and how they were meant to use it.¹⁰⁰ Like the 'terreiros' at the 29th Sao Paulo Bienal, clearer signage and more visibly set out materials and equipment in the space, would have better indicated that it was possible to use the space to make art.

The photographs originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions.

Figs. 88 and 89. Archival images of Palle Nielsen, The Model: A Model for a Qualitative Society at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, 1968.

I had also proposed to the Learning Team that we could engage a group of local children in staging some form of recreation or reactivation of Palle Nielsen's *The Model*.¹⁰¹ *The Model: A Model for a Qualitative Society* was originally created at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, in 1968. Nielsen worked with the Socialist collective Action Dialogue to re-configure the museum as an enormous adventure playground

⁹⁸ Email interview with Lindsey Fryer, 27th March 2014.

⁹⁹ Fryer stated that in 'her experience was that 'embedding such a space in a gallery context that was sometimes inhabited and sometimes not was problematic and inevitably will produce some uncertainty in some visitors... Though it was sometimes staffed by LJMU students this did not seem to mitigate people's apprehensions about engaging with the space in this instance'. Email interview with Lindsey Fryer, 27th March 2014.

¹⁰⁰ When the space was occupied by a workshop or discussion, the majority of the casual adult visitors tended to be unsure whether they were permitted to enter, and when it was empty several were confused about whether or not it was an art installation.

¹⁰¹ The Wolfson Room is the large downstairs space at Tate Liverpool normally used for supplementary displays and commissions that compliment or form part of the fourth floor special exhibitions.

for children.¹⁰² Of particular interest for *Art Turning Left*, was that the process of production was a continually unfolding part of the display, and that the children were given the tools (including hammers and saws) and the materials to build some of the play structures themselves. The idea of reactivating *The Model* was, crucially, followed through, but it was decided – in accordance with Francesco Manacorda’s new ‘magazine’ framework for Tate Liverpool – that it should be conceived as a distinct exhibition, housed in the Wolfson Room but running parallel to *Art Turning Left*. Lars Bang Laarsen and Maria Lind, who had already begun a significant research project around the legacy of Nielsen’s work, entitled *The New Model: An Inquiry*, were originally invited to lead a group of artists and curators in developing a creative plan for the project. They were facilitated at Tate by Research Curator, Dr Antony Hudek and Assistant Curator, Dr. Stephanie Straine.¹⁰³ However, the group ultimately rejected the creative plan for a contemporary reactivation of *The Model* and Laarsen and Lind resigned the project.

The project was ultimately materialised as a conventional archival display (fig. 92), featuring a slide show of images, advertising and magazine articles, and copies of the original vinyl LPs, which could be listened to on headphones. The atmosphere and ethos of the highly controlled, sombre and reflexive exhibit could not have been further from the chaotic free-play of the original. The group recognised and discussed at lengths the problems of recreating the project in a contemporary public art institution, due to health and safety legislation, insurance costs and contemporary perspectives on child safeguarding. Yet, Manacorda’s impression was that the decision, not to take forward a recreation or reactivation, was motivated more by a concern amongst the group about staging this within Tate. He stated that the group ‘found it impossible to reload such an anti-hegemonic project within what they perceived as a capitalist institution’. This rejection of Tate as a viable venue for a counter-hegemonic project is particularly interesting given that Maria Lind is one of the most vocal proponents of Mouffe’s theory amongst professional curators. Tate Liverpool were left with little time or resources at that stage, to curate the display with anything other than the archival materials, which had been secured. It was rightly adjudged that a

¹⁰² The group built illegal play areas around Stockholm. Nielsen intended it to serve as an experimental model that could contribute to the development of a future socialist society, by showing the adult observers the importance of free creative play.

¹⁰³ For more details of their project see: the E-Flux announcement, ‘The Society without Qualities’ *E-Flux*, at: <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/the-society-without-qualities/> (accessed 14.09.14).

purely archival display was a better option than a half-hearted recreation *because* it was so emphatically different from the original.



Fig 90. Installation view of Palle Nielsen: *The Model*, Tate Liverpool (2013-14), showing the archival presentation, prior to the inclusion of the 'Doodle Den' ©Tate Photography

Hudek, organised a symposium to in relation to the project entitled *Ludic Play*, which investigated the role of 'play', 'fun' and 'games' in the museological context.¹⁰⁴

However, this symposium – formal, academicised, and cloistered off from the public display – was the antithesis of the kind of public, active, engaged and spontaneous research Nielsen offered through the model. Though this was always a conscious, thought-out decision, the fact that neither the display nor the symposium utilised creative play as means of learning, was still a missed opportunity, in terms of my counter-hegemonic objectives. The danger is that this strips the fun and the risk out of play and presented it as something to observe rather than participate in.¹⁰⁵ This tension was not lost on the visitors, whose comments highlighted it as the reason for their ambivalence towards the display. One visitor observed, for example, that the 'display contradicted the event and... the notion of play and democratic space'. They

¹⁰⁴ The introductory text for the symposium read: 'precisely because it was found to be so difficult to replicate *The Model* in any major museum today, 'The Model' prompts us to take seriously the challenges that play poses to the physical and theoretical premises of the contemporary museum'. CFP: The Ludic Museum (Liverpool, 31 Jan-1 Feb 2014). In: H-ArtHist, Nov 9, 2013 <http://arthist.net/archive/6376> (accessed Jan 8, 2016)

¹⁰⁵ This was a criticism that was also levelled at Palle Nielsen's original project.

noted their disappointment that it failed to either recreate the original or function as ‘a really useful discursive open archive’, because, ‘it had a closed tone to it and there weren't any translations’.¹⁰⁶

Towards the end of the exhibitions run, the learning team, commissioned an artist-educator to work with local children to produce a form of temporary interactive play space to be housed within the exhibit. As the Tate Report noted, ‘The Doodle Den within *Palle Nielsen* was the first time a family activity has been integrated into a main gallery display at Tate’. This can, therefore, be claimed as a small shift in the institutions practice. The imaginary boundary line that had previously prevented family making activities being situated within the gallery space, was forever permeated, through our collective conversations around integrating making in the space. This opened up the possibility of further experimentation and research.



Figs. 91. And 92. Installation views of *Palle Nielsen: The Model*, Tate Liverpool (2013-14), showing the archival presentation, with the ‘Doodle Den’ © Evelyn Arts courtesy of Sarah Marsh.

These examples expose how the sanctified status of art, and the increasingly high value of art works, can delimit the political potential of the exhibition medium; a problem exasperated by modern day health and safety imperatives. They show how conservation rules designed to protect art works and, thus, our knowledge of art, can also constrain our understanding by delimiting the ways in which work can be displayed and viewed. Similarly, health and safety legislation designed to protect our health and wellbeing, can sometimes impinge on our ability to expand our physical and mental capabilities, by restricting our movements and creative agency. They engender important questions about how public art institutions can best serve our collective

¹⁰⁶ Another proclaimed, ‘the hanging / installation is at complete odds to the spirit of the work. It felt static and un-engaging’. Audience comments, Tate Liverpool, January 2014 (Appendix 5b).

interests and needs. Do we still want them, for example, to prioritise the conservation, care and presentation of high status art collections, even where this restricts other forms of learning about and from art? How is the publicly funded art institution to deliver on the demand to be contemporaneous, innovative and participatory without compromising on the care of its objects? This question is particularly pertinent for Tate who have a responsibility to care for the national collection but are also positioned as trailblazers in the international field.



Figs. 93 and 94. Installation views of David Medalla's 'A Stitch in Time', 1968-1972/2013 on display in *Art Turning Left*. © Tate, photograph Roger Sinek

The curatorial team did offer the visitor one further opportunity to participate in making within *Art Turning Left*, through the inclusion of David Medalla's ongoing participatory artwork, *Stitch in Time* (1968-1972/2013).¹⁰⁷ The work consisted of a long stretch of plain gold fabric with needles attached and spools of multi-coloured threads hanging above it. There was a handwritten sign by the artist, which, crucially, directly invited the audience to 'stitch anything you want' on the cloth. This polite invitation worked extremely well and the cloth quickly filled up with – often politicised – drawings, comments and motifs. The work proved one of the most popular pieces in the exhibition. The response of the audience to this simple concept was much more enthusiastic and politicised than I had imagined. It indicated that the provision of more collective art-making activities could have increased people's engagement with the concepts in the exhibition.

¹⁰⁷ Assistant Curator, Eleanor Clayton, had suggested this work.

It was clear that the location of Ruth Ewan's jukebox, *A Jukebox of People Trying to Change the World* (ongoing) within the same space further motivated visitors to participate in helping to make the work. The radical music that continuously filled the space seemed to temporally relieve the sedimented social conventions that exist in a museum setting, making the visitors less reserved in their actions and interactions, in the space, and encouraging free conversation. This indicates that if, crucially, the right atmosphere was created, and appropriate invitations to participate were offered, art-making activities can be used to prompt and stimulate collective and, potentially political, discussion and debate.

The comparative willingness of Tate to include the Medella work, however, also indicated that Tate are considerably more likely to allow the visitor to participate in art production, which is facilitated and legitimated by professional artists. This could be disempowering for the visitor, as it suggests that their work is only valid and legitimate if it is part of someone else's art. Thus, despite the success of the art work, in engaging the visitor in art-making, it did little to help further my specific counter-hegemonic objective of validating lay art production. With this in mind, it is important to consider how we represented lay art-making more generally, in the exhibition.

The proposal included a section entitled *Socialising Production*. This specifically examined attempts by leftist movements to promote the value of, and develop opportunities for, amateur artistic production- and to create distribution channels to bring this work to public attention.¹⁰⁸ But were the curatorial team persuaded of the validity of including amateur art production in the exhibition? Did we curate a section of amateur art that, in contrast to previous displays of 'outsider' and 'folk art' demonstrated the integral role of critical reflection and collective discussion? Was Andrew Brighton right when he described the very coherence of the official orthodoxy of art, promoted by Tate, as being 'contingent on the systematic exclusion of certain types of art, such as art of non-professionals and in particular 'working class painters of

¹⁰⁸ The content of the section I proposed encompassed experimental collaged found-material placards produced as part of the Suffragette Atelier, photographs from the Worker's Photography Movement, Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska *Enthusiasts Archive* of Polish Amateur Film Clubs, material from the Mass Observation movement, and art from the Ashington Group of Professional Painters, the Cuban *Movimiento de Aficionados (Movement of Amateurs)*, the Huxian Peasant Painters from China, the Solentiname Pintura Primitivista Painters, and the DiY movement.

working life’? ¹⁰⁹ What does the way in which lay art was presented in the exhibition reveal about the idea that art institutions can work to actively counter the neoliberal class project?

By far the most significant area of dissensus, in our curatorial team meetings, was over the inclusion of art made by lay artists. The idea of creating a section based around attempts to socialise and democratise art production, was not taken forward – and the specific proposals that I detailed in Chapter Three, for selections of work by the Ashington Miners, the Solentiname Pintura Primitivista Painters and the Polish Film Clubs, represented in the Enthusiasts Archive, were all rejected. Although a range of different pragmatic reasons were given – some more valid than others – it was clear that the curatorial team felt that the inclusion of amateur art threatened the very boundaries demarcating what was categorised as ‘art’. It was held that a curator, working in a modern art museum, must believe that professional art practice represents a separate ontological category to fulfil their institutional mission. Amateur art was, thus, ‘not art’ but rather ‘visual culture’. On these grounds, it was even claimed that the proposed inclusion of lay art, was essentially ‘anti-art’. Moreover, it was argued that such work could not be considered transformative, in an art historical sense, and it was often unclear in lay art production whether the people were aware of the political implications of what they were doing. ¹¹⁰

The first task was therefore to make the case that the participants in these movements *did* consciously produce their art as part of a collective political effort and the politics of opening up creative production *was* the fundamental point of all of these movements. For example, by showing how the individuals in the Worker’s Photography Movement (WPM) came to be involved through their membership of the politicised Worker’s Clubs, and by reading explicitly Communist magazines such as AIZ. The political mission, of the WPM project, was always made clear, and the participants

¹⁰⁹ Andrew Brighton and Lynda Morris, *Towards another picture: an anthology of writings by artists working in Britain 1945-77*, Midland Group, Nottingham, 1977, p.5.

¹¹⁰ The specific examples of amateur art production, that I had proposed, were argued to contradict our argument that leftist political values have transformed the way that art is made and done. For example, work produced as part of the Polish Amateur Film Clubs, was deemed irrelevant, as they were developed as part of a state-based initiative. It was, thus, unclear whether the people actually making the work were individually leftist, or even aware of the political implications of what they were doing. It was also claimed that these movements had not resulted in any significant changes to the way that art is made and done. Members of the curatorial team had, for example, expressed the view that the WPM did nothing more than produce standard documentary photographs in a style that had already been developed by professional artists.

were encouraged to think of themselves as part of the collective building of a Communist international movement. Or by arguing, for example, that the DiY movement is so overtly grounded in anti-capitalist resistance, in every aspect of its organisation and ethics that it would be incredibly patronising to claim that the participants are unaware that what they are doing is political. Moreover, because these movements are defined by a belief that that art should be an essential component of everyone's day-to-day lives, they should never be considered anti-art.

It was also necessary to persuade the curatorial team how amateur movements could be exhibited to demonstrate that they *had* brought about transformations in arts practice. I made the point that, in Marxist terms, this is always more than just a question of the production process itself. Of equal importance is access to the 'means of production' and the social 'relations of production'.¹¹¹ Of course, the majority of people in modern societies now have access – both physically and financially – to the materials that would allow them to participate in the production of art in some form e.g. paint, brushes, paper and pencils. Nonetheless, this is not true of all forms of art production — hence, the necessary development of printmaking collectives such as the Taller Grafica Popular in Mexico and the workers' photography and film clubs, which pooled facilities and enabled ordinary people to be involved in the production of visual culture.

Equality of access does not, however, just concern access to the equipment and materials needed to make art, but is also a question of who is able to show their work in, and through, public institutions; who is considered to be an artist and what is understood as art. In other words, the left have, historically, been as much concerned with who has access to participating in the production of an official and legitimated art and culture as with the content and form of artworks: the 'who' is just as important as the 'what'. I argued that the prominence of such concerns within leftist art production, meant that it was essential, for this exhibition, that we used an expanded definition of art that widened the parameters beyond professional status. I asked: how can the exhibition speak of equality, collectivism and social justice whilst reaffirming the idea

¹¹¹ Marx argues that under capitalism these relations are based on the fundamental class division between those who own the means of production, the bourgeoisie, and the property-less proletariat who must sell his labour to survive. Indeed, the primary objective of Marxists has been to equalise access to, and ultimately collectivise, the means of production in order to dissolve class division and reach a state of true equality in a classless society.

that creative non-alienating labour does not exist beyond the professional artist?



Figs. 95 and 96. (Left) AIZ Magazine, no 38, 1931: 24 Hours in the life of a family working in Moscow, featured in Art Turning Left. (Right) Installation view of the vitrine featuring the copy of AIZ in Art Turning Left. © Tate, photograph Roger Sinek

Anxieties were also raised about the aesthetic quality of the work and, thus, their inclusion in an exhibition with an entry fee. The public consciousness has, after all, been ingrained for centuries with the idea that they attend art museums and fund their existence in order to view examples of ‘excellence’ in art. I argued, however, that it is part of the institutions public service to push the boundaries of what ‘excellence’ is. Although paintings, such as those produced at Solentiname, may look superficially crude or naïve from a modernist perspective, it is important to recognise that they were produced as part of a sophisticated dialogical process. Indeed, it was the completely embedded dialogical process that constituted the innovation in the processes of production, and marked the project out as distinct from Western community art projects. To strengthen my argument, I used Jorge Ribalta’s example of the Filipov photo-essay to demonstrate that the WPM did, not only innovate in terms of developing a truly international mass amateur art movement, but also contributed to the advancement of new techniques and forms.¹¹² Ribalta argues that WPM heralded the ‘birth of the photo essay’ and that the ‘discourses on serial imagery, montage and text-picture combinations, that culminate with the Filipov essay, are the essential formulation of the printed page as a photographic discursive space for the future’.¹¹³ Emphasising the WPM’s influence on both Allan Sekula and the Hackney

¹¹³ With this statement, he artfully argued that the WPM contributed greatly to innovations in the interaction between text and image in art making and beyond, and in particular to the development of the photo-essay which has been claimed as a modernist paradigm. He claims that the reason that the influence of the WPM is not recognised is indeed because it has been almost

Flashers, who were also included in the exhibition, proved to be, at least partially, persuasive. The curatorial team finally agreed to the inclusion of a small vitrine display. However, this consisted of only a single copy of the AIZ magazine, featuring the original 'Filipov family' photo-essay: *24 Hours in the Life of a Moscow Worker Family*.¹¹⁴ It is also important to emphasise the level of resistance I faced in negotiating even this small display.¹¹⁵



Fig. 97 and 98. (Left) Photographer unknown, Chinese women play important role in revolution and construction, Publisher: Hsinhua News Agency, 1975, 20 February, IISH collection, featured in 'Art Turning Left'. (Right) An example of Huxian Peasant Painting, that represents the collective dialogical process, by Du Mingcen; Yao Zhongxin, Drawing new pictures with a coloured brush, September 1975, Private Collection.

The curatorial team, thus, moved from their original resistance (to including amateur art production), to agreeing its relevance to this particular exhibition. However, rather than developing a section that focused specifically on attempts to socialise art production, they dispersed more diverse examples through different sections of the exhibition as a recurring leitmotif. Several of these works ultimately came together in

completely written out of art history by the American cultural cold-war hegemony, which attempted to claim all modernist innovation as stemming from a liberal democratic and anti-Communist position, and that this has dictated the way such work is represented, or indeed not represented, in major Western art museums. See: Guy Lane and Jorge Ribalta, *Workers Photography Movement*, 30th May 2011. Available online at: <http://www.foto8.com/live/worker-photography-movement/> (accessed 01/10/2014).

¹¹⁴ Though the photo essay was fully developed as a form, as part of the WPM as early as the 1930s, it is the contemporary practitioners influenced by the WPM in the 1970s, such as Jo Spence and Allan Sekula, who have been ascribed as the technical and aesthetic innovators in the field. The work included was: Worker's Photography Movement feature 24 Hours in the Life of a Moscow Worker Family In AIZ No. 38 1931, Printed publication. In retrospect, the *Filipov* photo-essay was a bad example to choose for this particular exhibition, as this particular work, often held up as an exemplary work of the WPM, was actually produced by professional photo-journalists rather than worker artists. This is not so problematic if it forms part of the wider story of the WPM as a movement, and if, as Ribalta, did it is used to explore some of the contradictions in the WPM and to draw out and make visible some of the curatorial difficulties involved in sourcing examples of lay art production. However, if I had known that would ultimately be the single work used to represent the WPM in the exhibition, I would have argued against this being that one work, as it did little to help make my counter-hegemonic case that amateur art production can be both socially meaningful and formally and technically innovative.

¹¹⁵ It was proposed that rather than displaying any of the original photographs or magazines associated with the WPM as art objects, we instead represented the WPM as a 'cultural movement' through a graphic map which pinpointed the various magazines, clubs and exhibitions throughout the world. Although, I felt this would be a useful addition to a display of the WPM's work, it was important in terms of my counter-hegemonic agenda to present the photographs, photo-essays and magazine articles as *art*.

the confusingly titled section, *Can Pursuing Equality Change How Art is Made?* Whilst *Does Participation Deliver Equality?*, included more conventional participatory works such as, the aforementioned, *Jukebox of People Trying to Change the World*, and *Stitch in Time*; examples of op and kinetic art by the visual art research collective GRAV, and Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane's *Folk Archive*.



Figs. 99 to 101. (Left) Installation view of 'My Room', Black-E, 1982 in Art Turning Left. Photograph Lynn Wray.

Though they were not necessarily the works I had proposed, *Can Pursuing Equality Change How Art is Made?* featured several works that developed out of a process of embedded collective dialogical exchange. Poster reproductions of the 'Huxian Peasant Painters' paintings, which gained international attention during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, were accompanied by documentary photographs that framed the paintings as part of a collective dialogical process. These paintings were produced as part of the Communist government campaign to promote the idea that everyone could, and should, practice art making- as part of their everyday lives.¹¹⁶ It also featured *My Room*, a collective installation made as part of public workshops led by the Liverpool-based, community arts organisation *The Black-E*, like Ernesto Cardenal's project at Solentiname, had developed out of collective discussions about the political themes of

¹¹⁶ For examples of the posters and photographs see the website produced by the International Institute of Social History and Stefan Landsberger, to show and interpret their collections. Available at: <http://chineseartists.net/themes/huxian-peasant-painters.php> (accessed 23.06.2015) and their book: Marien van der Heijden, Stefan R. Landsberger and Kuiyi Shen, *Chinese Posters. The IISH-Landsberger Collections*, Prestel, Munich, 2009.

a fictional work: in this case, they used Virginia Woolf text, 'A Room of One's Own', to discuss 'equality' and the need for personal space.¹¹⁷

A further work, *Amerika – For Karl* (1989), had been produced as part of Tim Rollins ongoing project with a group of South Bronx students described as 'emotionally or academically at risk'; collectively known as the 'Kids of Survival' (K.O.S). Again, the work developed out of a collective political critique of fictional works. For this painting, the group had discussed and responded to the themes of Franz Kafka's *Amerika*. Finally, it featured, Wendelien Van Oldenburg's slide installation, *Après la reprise, la prise* (2009), made in collaboration with a group of former assembly line workers. The slides showed the women collectively discussing their experience of being actresses in a post-Fordist fictionalised version of their own real-life experience. They had been invited to play themselves in a touring theatrical production about the closure of the factory. Crucially, the work selected for this section, did, therefore, counter the representation of amateur art as introverted and introspective. It positioned amateur art production as a critical, reflexive and collective process – as I aimed for in my original proposals.

However, other 'lay' works included in the exhibition contradicted this aim. The selection of objects from Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane's *Folk Archive*, for example, conflated amateur art production with kitsch. The display and interpretation failed to draw out the collective power of folk production, or the challenge that it brings to the ubiquity of capitalist standardised mass production. Piero Gilardi's *Psichiatrica Alternativa* (Alternative Psychiatry movement) was an extremely relevant addition to the exhibition, which fully linked the production of the artist to leftist values and ideas. Between 1974 and 1982 Gilardi became part of 'La Commune' a left-wing group who worked with people with mental health problems, and social 'outsiders' to produce artwork as an alternative to psychiatric therapy. However, the installation was essentially a micro-exhibition of 'outsider art', something that I stressed it was essential to avoid if we were to reposition amateur art production as an intellectual, critical and reflexive discipline. Although the innate creativity of ordinary people was

¹¹⁷ For more information on this project, see the Black-E archive on their website. Available online at: <http://archive.theblack-e.co.uk/archive/category/participation/themed-boxes/content/my-room-1982> (accessed 14.06.2015).

acknowledged in both installations, the ability to reflect critically upon the work is attributed to the professional artists.



Figs. 102 and 103. (Left) Installation view of 'Does Participation Deliver Equality?' in Art Turning Left ©Tate Photograph by Roger Sinek.



Figs. 104 and 105. (Left) Installation view of Piero Gilardi, 'Psichiatria Alternativa', 1974-1982 in Art Turning Left, Tate Liverpool. (Right) Close up of work produced as part of the project. ©Tate Photograph by Roger Sinek.

Moreover, although photography, film, paintings or sculptures – produced by lay practitioners – was not 'art', in Tate's view, but merely 'visual culture', *Folk Archive*, could be easily accommodated, simply because lay 'visual culture' was mediated and represented by professional artists, as their art work. Deller and Kane had, apparently, transformed the 'ephemera of visual culture' into an officially legitimated art. Crucially, however, this was not the art of the lay people who produced the exhibited objects – rather the artwork was the act of compiling the material as 'found objects'. The

caption accompanying the work read: 'Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane began compiling the *Folk Archive*, an archive of the rich and varied visual culture that exists in the UK outside of the art world and would not normally be seen in a gallery context'. Indeed, it was notable, that the majority of 'lay' works included, throughout the exhibition, were developed, led and, most importantly, authored by established professional artists.

Thus, although it is tempting to infer (from the relatively high number of works involving lay production) that I had achieved my objective of positioning it as a legitimate and equally valuable form of *art*, Tate never really let go of the need to privilege professional art. For lay art to be accepted and presented as 'art', it absolutely required the legitimising force of an established professional artist.¹¹⁸

Lindsey Fryer, affirmed, though not necessarily condoned, this when she stated:

There are many artists who work with non-professionals in the process and production of their work and we have shown many of these works in collection displays and special exhibitions over the years... Showing non-professional work in the gallery outwith these contexts only happens through working with artists in a learning context in non-gallery spaces. The exception to this is when it is a temporary performance or intervention is conceived as part of a public programme, rather than curatorially conceived.¹¹⁹

Here, she infers that lay art can only be admitted to the gallery space, if it is reconceptualised as 'education' rather than 'art' – and, thus, does not threaten the definition of art as a professional practice. Tate Liverpool could easily accommodate

¹¹⁸ It must be acknowledged that, on reflection, this same point could be made about the *Enthusiasts Archive*, that I suggested for inclusion in *Section Three* and which I am ironically now duty bound to acknowledge as being an artwork by Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska. However, they do at least brand it as a 'collaborative artwork' produced in conjunction with the original authors of the films. My reason for originally suggesting this body of material was, not because it was authored by established artists, but because they had put significant time and expertise into accumulating the films of amateur Polish film clubs, which I would have liked, in any case, to represent in the exhibition but lacked the resources or the specific knowledge to do this. Cummings and Lewandowska's political framing of the project, also distinguished their archival work from the *Folk Archive*. However, including this project as a Cummings and Lewandowska artwork, rather than a curatorial project, which in my view it would more accurately be defined as, would still have on reflection, compromised the integrity of a section on *Socialising Production* as a whole, in the same way these other works did. Andrew Abbot provides an interesting analysis of the different presentations of self-organised amateur activity as a means of anti-capitalist resistant and non-capitalist subjectivity in his doctoral thesis. Andrew Derek Ross Abbot, *Radical Resonances: Art, Self-organised Cultural Activity and the Production of Postcapitalist Subjectivity; or, Deferred Self-Inquiry of a Precarious Artworker, 2008 – 2011*. PhD Thesis, Leeds University, February 2012. See: <http://www.yvonnecarmichael.com/andyabbott.co.uk/files/AARadicalResonances.pdf> (Accessed 13.11.2013).

¹¹⁹ Email interview with Lindsey Fryer, 27th March 2014.

professionally mediated participatory works involving lay production, as this did not challenge their overall definition and positioning of art.¹²⁰

2.4 Conclusion

The critical failure of the exhibition as a counter-hegemonic enterprise, lay in my inability to persuade the curatorial team of the necessity of making the processes of production visible in, and central to, the display. Because the labour processes remained invisible I could not reasonably claim that the exhibition demystified art production, or the positioning of art as a 'divine gift' beyond the capabilities of ordinary people. The exhibition therefore did not tackle the reinforcement of class hierarchies, in the way I had proposed was necessary to challenge the neoliberal consolidation of class power. This also undermined both our articulation of the exhibition concept and the proposed objective of empowering the visitor by opening up the work, the exhibition and political values, to critical debate. How can an exhibition purport to invite the audience to question and debate how political values have influenced the way art works are made, displayed and distributed, without making these processes visible, and, thus, knowable, to the audience? Similarly, the lack of opportunities for the visitor to participate in making, and the cautious, always professionally-mediated approach to including non-professional art in the gallery space, undermined my counter-hegemonic objective of opening up the possibility of creative, non-alienated production, beyond the professional artist.

It is certainly possible that another guest curator, with more experience, might have better persuaded the team of the validity of these ideas. But would an institution whose political rationality was based on upholding 'particular relations of neoliberal dominance', and devaluing the labour of local people, ever really be open to placing 'art on a par with other forms of production?'¹²¹ As Antoinette McKane demonstrated in her analysis of Tate Liverpool's formation in 1988, there has been an ideological imperative behind the institutions presence in Liverpool. According to McKane it was specifically intended to contribute to the Conservative government's systematic

¹²⁰ The wall panel for *Does Participation Deliver Equality?* did, at least, helpfully suggest that the idea that participatory art practice was egalitarian and emancipatory for the participant was problematic. It served as a prompt for the visitor to question why amateur art production itself is not included in institutional representations of national culture.

¹²¹ See: Antoinette McKane, *Tate Liverpool as a Force for Social Renewal? A Critical Study of Art Museum Education, Expansion and Urban Change (1988-2008)*, PhD Thesis, University of Liverpool, 2012, p.160.

eradication of the traditional Port industry in Liverpool’ and its politicised and unionised workforce. The key role it played in the regeneration of the Albert Dock provided a cosmetic gloss over the derelict landscape, and helped to engender a new culture of consumption in the city by ‘privileging an economy in which the cultural gratification of affluent consumers is serviced by a low-paid local workforce’.¹²²

Mouffe would argue that Tate’s role in reinforcing the neoliberal hegemony would have made it the ideal locus for a counter-hegemonic challenge. However, Tate’s reluctance to shift their existing orthodox definition of art, to deviate from their sedimented installation and interpretation practices, or to articulate partisan, polemic or antagonistic political views, is indicative of a wider problem with positioning the guest curator as the ‘organic intellectual’ capable of leading the challenge against neoliberalism. Although a guest curator may be able to provide a fresh perspective, shift certain embedded practices or open the institution to new ways of doing things, they are never going to have the power, or authority, to change the essential, political rationality of the institution, if that institution, itself, does not believe it is necessary to change these aspects.

Publicly-funded institutions are often locked into their standard ways of doing and making, by the requirement to be impartial, financial limitations and other pressures. Tate Liverpool is further constrained by an established brand of installation and interpretation and a strong public expectation of what Tate should deliver. However, there was nothing inherent in the institutional framework or mission statement that would have prevented the curatorial team from prioritising making ‘making’ visible in the gallery space. All that was needed, in this case, was the institutional will and the backing to develop a different approach. Therefore, although Tate’s resistance to using the terminology of left and right, or to articulate an ideological value-driven concept of politics, further problematises Mouffe’s argument that the existing public art institutions can be rearticulated as sites for the enactment of radical agonistic politics – it does not rule out the possibility of counter-hegemonic or post-political critique

¹²² See: Antoinette McKane, *Tate Liverpool as a Force for Social Renewal? A Critical Study of Art Museum Education, Expansion and Urban Change (1988-2008)*, PhD Thesis, University of Liverpool, 2012, p. 159

altogether. Rather, it suggests that there must be a widespread desire to change an institution's whole practice from those already within the institution.

Conclusion

This study set out to interrogate the idea that exhibitions in public art institutions are a viable medium through which to contest and challenge the neoliberal hegemony. I sought to provide an original, and much needed, critical contribution to the field of curatorial practice, by doing two things. Firstly, by focusing on the effect that such strategies have on the exhibition visitors, I sought to demonstrate that the current approaches to counter-hegemonic curatorial practice are flawed and misdirected. Secondly, I aimed to prove the radical potential of a new model of counter-hegemonic exhibition making that rearticulated the historic survey as a form of post-political critique and, unlike current practices, focussed on tackling the reinforcement of class hierarchies, within art institutions.

The research presented in this study *has* allowed me to demonstrate that the new forms of counter-hegemonic practice (that have emerged since 1989) have not only been ineffective, but are even counter-productive. The research has shown that leftist curators, seeking to empower people to participate in civic discourse, have been deeply influenced by Chantal Mouffe's ideas. However, in attempting to apply these concepts to their exhibition making, curators have, ironically, ended up creating new hegemonic forms that foreclose, rather than allow for, the political agency of the spectator. Where curators have focused on strategies of disarticulation and deconstruction — instead of employing the exhibition as a medium through which to explicitly articulate a political position — they have simply confused the visitor and mystified the art still further. This makes it harder for the visitor to engage, intellectually, with either the artworks or the political themes on offer.

The research presented in this thesis suggests that the application of radical anti-authorialism to exhibition making, is disempowering, not only in terms of navigating and engaging with the exhibition, but also in relation to peoples' understanding of their own political and creative agency. However well intended anti-authorial gestures may be, they tend to better further neoliberal objectives than counter-hegemonic ones. In disregarding intentionality, they set up a situation where the intentions of the artist or

the curator, or indeed any cultural producer — whether professional or lay practitioner — are rendered irrelevant and inconsequential. This robs people of their political agency as it logically implies that there is no point attempting to produce a particular effect — political or otherwise. This delivers politics back into the hands of the political elite of technocratic experts, reinforcing a post-political concept of politics where people are told they do not have the appropriate skills and qualification to engage actively in civic life. If Mouffe argues that the success of the radical democratic project depends on people putting into practice the ideals they profess, then they would have to believe there was at least the possibility of their intentions producing a desired effect to be mobilised.

Though I had anticipated that state-funded institutions would seek to present themselves as non-partisan, it was nonetheless surprising, to uncover just how far the concept of politics articulated in their exhibitions, mirrored the post-ideological, consensus politics that helps to sustain the neoliberal hegemony. This was particularly so, because many of the exhibitions I reviewed had been curated with either specific counter-hegemonic intent or from an explicitly leftist position. This study highlighted how the illusion of objectivity and neutrality that these institutions strive to maintain, only works to alienate people from participating in political discourse. Similarly, the positioning of the curator as a neutral facilitator was revealed to be disingenuous and disempowering, depriving the viewer of the opportunity to react critically to what is presented. By failing to acknowledge the existence of, or distinction between, left-right political positions, for example, institutions not only exclude the framework that the vast majority of people across the world use to determine and understand their own political views but also negate a useful mechanism for stimulating productive debate.

Most importantly, this study has established that leftist curators are missing a crucial opportunity to challenge neoliberal dominance by misdirecting their counter-hegemonic intent towards curatorial authorship and narratives. With the notable exception of WHW, the existing practices do not provide either a clear political alternative to neoliberalism or the crucial means of collective identification needed for genuine social transformation. The danger in not seizing such opportunities is that it leaves the door open to right wing opportunism and extremism. Indeed, this was borne out during the so-called 'Arab Spring', when the progressive forces that had succeeded in toppling

dictatorial regimes could not offer the clear collective political agenda that would enable them to take power. Instead, as Mouffe predicted, the door was left open to those religious fundamentalists, and right wing or conservative organisations that did have a clear collective vision. In offering this example, I am making the point that those who succeed in moving their agenda forward (when any public space is opened up to political debate) tend to be those who are unabashed at stating what their position is. For example, when Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, hosted an exhibition of LGBTI relevant art, entitled *Sh(out)*, in 2009, their social justice campaign was significantly undermined by the vocal and targeted campaign of a single journalist in the right wing media, and a small group of local evangelical Christians.¹

Moreover, this thesis has demonstrated that the influence of post-structuralism, and, in particular, Chantal Mouffe's theory, has diverted attention away from the much more critical need to address the continuing reinforcement of social class hierarchies. Neoliberals have succeeded in concentrating class power in the hands of an increasingly small global capitalist elite, by using all of the state institutions (including art institutions) to maintain the notion that such hierarchies and inequalities are natural and just. However — although it is clear that neoliberals have sustained dominance by directing people away from collective class identification — leftist curators have shown little interest in challenging the neoliberal class project. The central recommendation that therefore emerges from this research is that, to be truly counter-hegemonic, it is absolutely imperative that curators challenge how institutional art exhibitions encourage social distinction and reinforce a post-ideological conception of politics.

True to the principle of rearticulation that Mouffe advocates, the research, presented here, did not just enact critique for critique's sake, but also pointed to alternative strategies that could potentially be more politically effective. The alternative counter-hegemonic model, that I offered, showed how the exhibition could be used as a medium to articulate a different concept of politics; creating a concept and organising principle that revived the left-right model of contestational politics — and brought conflicting

¹ See: Richard Sandell, Jocelyn Dodd and Ceri Jones, *An evaluation of sh[OUT] – The social justice programme of the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow 2009-2010*, November 2010. Available online at: <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/projects/sh-out/An%20evaluation%20of%20shOUT.pdf> (accessed 12.10.2015).

ethico-political principles in to contact with each other. It also provided a potential solution to the mystification of art and the devaluation of the creative labour of ordinary people in institutional exhibitions, which reinforce class positions. It focussed on the value of thinking and learning through making — positioning art as a production process, making the ‘art making’ processes central to the display, and validating the creative work and critical faculty of lay artists. Finally, it proposed a new method to help constitute more critical, questioning, viewing subjects. This combined incongruous juxtapositions of art work and polemic questions in order to make passive consumption of the material difficult. It also advocated the use of the first person, opinions, positions and clear statements of intent in the in-gallery texts, to position the exhibition as a subjective construct and, thus, open it up to critique.

Unfortunately, I was unable to prove the viability or political efficacy of this model, as many of the central propositions were not realised in *Art Turning Left*. However, my experience of attempting, and for the most part, failing to push forward my counter-hegemonic objectives, *did* enable me to prove that there were fundamental problems in envisaging the existing public art museums as a space for counter-hegemonic critique or agonistic debate. If, for example, I was unable to persuade Tate to use the terminology of ‘left and right’ or emphasise ideological aspects of works in the interpretative texts for an exhibition focussed exclusively on the influence of left-wing ideology, there is little chance that other public art institutions would accommodate contestational politics. It is even less likely that they would be willing to deviate from neutral and objective in-gallery texts. This revealed an important contradiction in the positioning of art institutions as alternative spaces for radical political discourse – they are, almost without exception, deeply resistant to the expression of ideological, partisan and polemic political positions. We must either agree that public funding necessitates a firm maintenance of a non-partisan neutral position, or invalidate this idea so that exhibitions can become spaces for radical political discourse. The two positions are irreconcilable.

It is therefore worth questioning whether the limited amount of funding institutions such as Tate actually received from the state (70% of its income is from non-governmental sources, including trading, admissions to temporary exhibitions and fundraising activities) is worth the demand of impartiality that it apparently

necessitates.² Another potential way forward for the existing institutions, that could enable them to produce politicised exhibitions, would be to forcefully re-position their exhibitions as the speech act of the curator, by clearly identifying the curator as author-producer. They could then invite guest curators to curate from their own political position, without negating the demand of impartiality placed on the institution. Given that institutions such as Tate have established themselves as academic institutions (they have received funding from the AHRC for example to co-produce an initiate research projects such as this one) it also seems feasible that they could allow their own curators to produce exhibitions from their own position. In this sense they would be operating like a university, which has a similarly complex mix of funding income, where the individual academics, whilst representing and working for the institution, publish journal articles representing their own position. However, this study has indicated that the principle of neutrality is so deeply engrained in the Western liberal democratic psyche, that it would be very difficult to overturn, in relation to the existing art museums even without the complication of central government funding.

I had anticipated, to some extent, the anxiety that would be caused by undermining the supposed neutrality of the institution. However, what genuinely surprised me was the level of resistance that there was to ‘making processes visible’, and including amateur art production in the specific context of an exhibition that explicitly focussed on art as a production process. Tate’s resistance to my proposals affirmed that curators still strive to position professional art production as inherently superior to other activities and beyond the abilities of ‘ordinary people’— possibly, in order to cement the status of what they do and the institutions that they work within. However, most crucially, it indicated that institutional exhibitions are too bound up in reinforcing the increasingly slippery boundaries demarcating art as a separate ontological category to be simultaneously envisaged as counter-hegemonic.

Thus, in identifying the most important aspects of current institutional practice that needed to be challenged, I, perhaps unsurprisingly, found that these were the same aspects that they would be most reluctant to change. However, I do not agree with

² See the Tate website for more information on their funding sources: <http://www.tate.org.uk/about/who-we-are/funding> (accessed 12.12.16).

curators such as Paul O'Neill that argue that it is enough to change small aspects of existing practice. Instead, there needs to be more wholesale change, if institutional exhibitions are to avoid simultaneously furthering neoliberal objectives. As I have argued, guest curators cannot force an institution to change and, therefore, it is only possible to draw the conclusion that the potential for counter-hegemonic curating and agonistic practice, from within, is extremely limited. A genuinely efficacious counter-hegemonic curatorial practice, therefore, might require the creation of new kinds of institutions that can use exhibitions in a radically different way. If our existing institutions cannot accommodate antagonistic views, articulate an ideological politics and include opportunities for live making in the gallery space; or if the unique status of art prevents other forms of cultural production or lay art being legitimated, it is time now to seriously explore the potential of creating new cultural institutions that can.

Through this research, I identified a pressing need — common to the fields of politicised curatorial practice, fine art production and adult art education — to better understand the social consequences of deskilling creative labour and devaluing making processes. Whilst researching leftist art production for *Art Turning Left*, I identified that there is a need to critically interrogate the concept of deskilling as a democratising and emancipatory strategy, and elucidate the wider social consequences beyond the artists' intentions and the material form of the work.

Similarly, as this study has demonstrated, curators are increasingly neglecting, or altogether abandoning, the visual and spatial properties of the exhibition medium in favour of purely discursive forms — decentring curatorial authorship and deconstructing their own narratives. This, undoubtedly, constitutes a conscious politically-motivated deskilling of curatorial practice that mirrors similar developments in politicised fine art production. However, the false binary that has developed, as a result, offering the abandonment or disarticulation of the exhibition form, on the one hand, or the 'white cube', on the other, also belies a skill gap in the new generation of curators. This skill gap lies in the ability to articulate a complex thesis, or narrative, through visual, spatial and affective modes of communication; and to develop innovative new models of installation, which go beyond 'the white cube'. The growing pressure on curators to articulate complex theoretical concepts, whilst also appealing to a broad audience base,

has made this issue particularly urgent. The research questions that this raises are: are there alternative models of production or pedagogical approaches that could ‘re-skill’ the future curatorial workforce with the skills of visual communication and affective design? Are there models of interdisciplinary collaboration that can bring together people with different skillsets in the production of exhibitions?

Completing this study has enabled me to determine several avenues for further research. I seek to develop my research by engaging with the question of how, either, other forms of existing public institutions or new types of cultural institutions could develop exhibition-making practices that collapse the boundaries between intellectual, artistic and curatorial work, to revivify making as a form of ‘critical thinking’. I am particularly interested in investigating the potential of three new forms of institutional context, for collaborative and interdisciplinary exhibition making, which could rearticulate what the exhibition is and can be. I see these three forms as potential means of connecting politics, activism and academic research from different disciplines, with artists and curators, in order to inform, address and engage the public in civic, social and political issues relevant to their lives.

The first is the concept of the ‘project exhibition’, which involves critical collaborative exhibition making between academics, political activists, artists, filmmakers and designers — around a contemporary geo-political or local issue. This concept has already been theorised and developed by artist, exhibition-maker and academic Marion von Osten. However, I am interested in critically examining the specific potential of this format as a means of pushing forward specific political positions and arguments. By envisaging universities as equally significant exhibition-making venues, where curators could work and establish a valid practice, it might be possible to capitalise on the tradition of independent thought in university research, in order to bypass the issue of neutrality and impartiality that public art institutions face. It could also serve as a model for collaborative knowledge exchange between different university departments and different cultural institutions within the city; and as a means of both opening up academic research to wider public audiences and aligning universities more closely with a wider civic discourse.

The second option is for a new form of institutionality: an ‘institution for contemporary

culture'. By defining the remit more broadly; in terms of visual culture rather than 'art', it would obviate the need to so ruthlessly protect the ontological category of art, and enable new forms of exhibition-making to emerge. It would make it more possible to show professional art alongside other forms of cultural production — including popular culture and lay art production. This type of institution could better accommodate a form of curatorial practice that positions 'making as a form of critical thinking'. The exhibition could become a space for active knowledge production and public making — influenced by the type of events organised by the 'maker' movement, fab labs, and DiY communities. Such exhibitions could further leftist values by emphasising the importance of knowledge-sharing, collaboration and collectivism. This would, in my view, offer a more effective means of empowering the public, as it would position them as active agents in the production and dissemination of their own culture. As Ernesto Cardenal advocated, participation in art-making offers greater creative and intellectual agency and engenders a greater awareness of one's own place in the world. This encourages an active involvement in politics.

The third option involves rearticulating the 'Town Hall' as a regular exhibition venue and site for curatorial experimentation. This idea is influenced by the exhibitions produced by Otto Neurath in Vienna, in the 1920s, at the *Gesellschafts-und Wirtschaftsmuseum*, which positioned the exhibition as a form of civic engagement. In these exhibitions, the public are introduced to, and encouraged to, actively debate relevant social, public planning, political, and environmental issues of local relevance. Town Halls — largely now only used for ceremonial and corporate purposes — could be reimagined as venues for civic engagement. They could become regular venues for the production of exhibitions where artists, designers and filmmakers were specifically commissioned to make relevant civic issues visible and engaging, and to make work that critically reflects upon, or offers opinions on, that issue. Cultural production workshops could also be an ongoing feature, that enabled members of the public to produce and exhibit work relevant to local, national and international political concerns.

The information and analyses presented in this study would be useful for both independent and gallery-based curators seeking to further political agendas of any sort, within institutional settings. It would enable them to think more critically about their

practice — offering a fuller understanding of the unique challenges that such work presents; and a more realistic view of the possibilities for counter-hegemonic and agonistic practice than existing literature provides. It could also serve as evidence for artists and curators that chose to build a counter-hegemonic practice outside of institutional contexts. It would be particularly useful to existing museum and art gallery professionals, offering a framework for critically evaluating their current approaches to opening up political debate, or furthering social justice agendas. This is particularly the case because recent work in the area of social justice in museums — in focussing on the representation of BME and LGBTQ culture — has negated the marginalisation of working class experience, perspectives and culture.³ Although such projects are important, and similarly challenge the institution by forcing them to reconsider the art historical narratives they present, they are easier for public art institutions to take on, as they don't necessarily represent a threat to the privileged and unique status of fine art as a separate ontological category — in the way that my proposals did. It would also be a valuable source of information on the curation and representation of political art and political themes since 1989 for exhibition studies, curatorial studies and art history students.

Although *Art Turning Left* did not function as a counter-hegemonic project in the way that I had envisaged, it did have an important legacy. As Anna Cutler and Francesco Manacorda's comments revealed, the exhibition served as a means of testing out a new approach to viewer engagement. Although not effective for everyone, it was found that the strategy of combining incongruous juxtapositions and questions, in the interpretative texts, moved the viewer out of passive consumption of the material presented, and helped to constitute more active, questioning viewing subjects. This provided a workable model for Tate to build upon and develop further, in reviewing their overall learning strategy.

Furthermore, in attempting to rearticulate the exhibition as an active learning resource, *Art Turning Left* also succeed in offering a new model of collaborative exhibition-making between universities and public art institutions — functioning as a vehicle for active

³ I am currently working as a researcher on one such project for National Museums Liverpool. Entitled *Pride and Prejudice* I am tasked with identifying and chronicling objects in the fine art and decorative art collections which have relevance to LGBT histories and cultures.

research and knowledge production. The exhibition was used by LJMU as a learning resource in a number of different ways. Firstly, I, of course, gained valuable curatorial experience and was able to make my research public to a much wider audience, through collaborating with Tate Liverpool. Secondly, both the wider exhibition and the *Office for Useful Art* became venues and material for a series of seminars and discussions for BA and MA Fine Art and Art History students. The latter also had the rare opportunity to curate a display— of the Tucman Arde project — within the context of an exhibition at a major public art institution. PhD candidate and practising artist Laura Guy also led a project, facilitated by *Inheritance Projects* that involved students from Manchester School of Art and LJMU in creating performance works within the gallery space, which responded to key themes.⁴ Finally, the leftist collective Chto Delat? — who featured in the exhibition — requested multiple copies of the exhibition supplement to use as a textbook in a new art school they had founded in St. Petersburg, Russia, called *The School of Engaged Art*.⁵ This supplement therefore further extended the legacy of the research for *Art Turning Left* beyond the spatial and temporal confines of the exhibition itself.

⁴ The *Inheritance Projects* website states: Intentions - Strategies - Works is a three-part investigation that seeks to develop strategies for history making in relation to the histories of Left cultural production. Working with artist Patrick Staff and researcher Ed Webb-Ingall, Inheritance Projects will convene a series of meetings at Tate Liverpool. These meetings will take place in the context of the exhibition *Art Turning Left*. <http://inheritanceprojects.org/intentions-strategies-works/> (accessed 15.07.2015).

⁵ See the Chto Delat? website for more information on their *School of Engaged Art*: http://chtodelat.org/category/c_1/ (accessed 12.12.2015).

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**Turning Left:
Counter-Hegemonic Exhibition-Making
in the Post-Socialist Era (1989 – 2014)**

Volume II: Appendices

Lynn Marie Wray

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Appendix 1.a

The Neo-Impressionists: Collective Harmony through Individual Autonomy

This case study will examine how the episodic approach could be utilised in order to present a more complex and in depth examination of how political values have been put into practice by artists. It will demonstrate how this approach would enable us to include works in the exhibition that challenge classification boundaries of what is considered left-wing, what is considered collective production and what is considered politicised arts practice. The central question this 'episode' of the exhibition poses is: is the only artistic application of collectivist values collective production? The Neo-Impressionists' are a germane case study through which to examine this question as their work was individually rather than collectively authored, and as such they are not generally understood to have been influenced by political values of collectivism. However, this particular 'episode' of the exhibition aims to demonstrate that their negation of wholly collective production, does not contradict, but rather reaffirms that they *were* emphatically influenced by specifically Anarchist-Communist collectivist values, and that this *did* have a significant impact on the way in which they produced their work.

This argument is particularly difficult to communicate to a lay audience as Anarchist-Communism is not a well known ideology and the Neo-Impressionists are not generally understood to be either politicised or a collective. Despite the abundance of literature that documents their association with Anarchist-Communism, the Neo-Impressionists have never been shown as part of a group exhibition of political art, and have never been included in either an exhibition or a published text about collectivism in the arts specifically. By including them in an exhibition about politicised art-making and by further positioning them in relation to collective practice we are thus entering completely uncharted territory. It is therefore safe to assume that the vast majority of the Tate Liverpool audience will require contextual information in order to fully understand why the Neo-Impressionists have been included in this exhibition and how the Anarchist-Communist position on collectivism impacted on their practice. I would thus argue that it is desirable to combine a didactic and a dialogical approach to interpretation in this display by ensuring that the audience are provided with enough contextual information to fully understand the argument that is being presented but are also invited to actively question the positions put forward.

This case study will therefore examine how specific artworks and contextual information can be most effectively selected and displayed in the exhibition space in order to communicate the central argument – that the Neo-Impressionists' working practice was influenced by the Anarchist-Communist idea of individual autonomy through collective harmony. It will also consider how we can provide opportunities for active and critical engagement with the material presented. I will therefore now outline what the Anarchist-Communism stance on collectivism is and the key ways in which this position impacted on the way the Neo-Impressionists made and did their work. This will allow me to then demonstrate which wall texts,

which paintings and which archival documentation, could best communicate these complex ideas to a non-expert audience and which strategies could be utilised to encourage people to think actively about the argument presented to them.

The Neo-Impressionists, Georges Seurat, Paul Signac, Maximilien Luce, Henri Edmond Cross, Charles Angrand, Camille Pissarro and the Belgian-born Théo van Rysselberghe were all supporters of, or sympathisers with, Anarchist-Communism. The political theory of Anarchist-Communism was developed by Pierre Kropotkin and Jean Grave, Elisée Reclus in France during the last three decades of the Nineteenth century.¹ The theory, as the name suggests, combined the seemingly incompatible anarchist desire for individual freedom and free association, and the communist principles of collective ownership, abolition of private property and equitable distribution of wealth. Kropotkin provided a clear but brief rationale for this union in his pamphlet 'Anarchism: Its philosophy and ideal':

Communism and anarchism... are ... a necessary complement to one another. The most powerful development of individuality, of individual originality... can only be introduced when the first needs of food and shelter are satisfied; when the struggle for existence against the forces of nature has been simplified; when man's time is no longer taken up entirely by the meaner side of daily subsistence – then, only, his intelligence, his artistic taste, his inventive spirit, his genius, can develop freely.²

The values of collectivity, mutual aid, and co-operation were thus central tenets of Anarchist-Communist theory. They believed that the only way to guarantee individual freedom and happiness was to work collectively to overcome social problems and inequalities, and that equally, intellectual, creative and artistic development were the cornerstones of individual happiness, and could be best nurtured in a socially just and equitable society, where people worked co-operatively by free-association. In short they believed strongly in the idea of individual autonomy through collective harmony. However, as Anarchist-Communism is a relatively obscure political ideology, it must be assumed that not everyone visiting the exhibition would have a good understanding of the fundamental tenets. We should therefore provide a clear introductory wall text that briefly explained the central position outlined above first. We should also boldly entitle the section with the question: *Individual Freedom through Collective Harmony?*³ This would introduce and invite the audience to think actively about these ideas from the moment they enter the display rather than asking them to just passively consume information. Furthermore, the key quote by Kropotkin, above, could be positioned as a wall text next to one of the key works by the Neo-Impressionists, in order to create a more direct connection between the core philosophy of Anarchist-Communism and the art work. This would visually signify to the viewer that we are making an argument and invite them to question how this philosophy impacted on the artwork itself.

¹ By the end of the century there were roughly 1000 militant anarchists and 100,000 people who were anarchist in sympathy and prepared to support anarchist aims, in France, as a result of their agitation: Donald Drew Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts in Western Europe: A Cultural History from the French Revolution to 1968*, (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1970), p. 241

² Pierre Kropotkin, *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal*, 1896, in Roger N. Baldwin (ed.), *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets* (Benjamin Blom, New York, 1968), p. 141

³ I am working on the assumption that the word *freedom* is clearer for most people than the word *autonomy*.

Furthermore, as the Neo-Impressionists have never been shown as part of a group exhibition of political art, and because their support of Anarchist-Communism is not common knowledge, it is important to provide visual evidence of the association at the beginning of the display. One simple means of doing this would be to create an archival display case, which featured select documentation of their commitment to Anarchist-Communism.

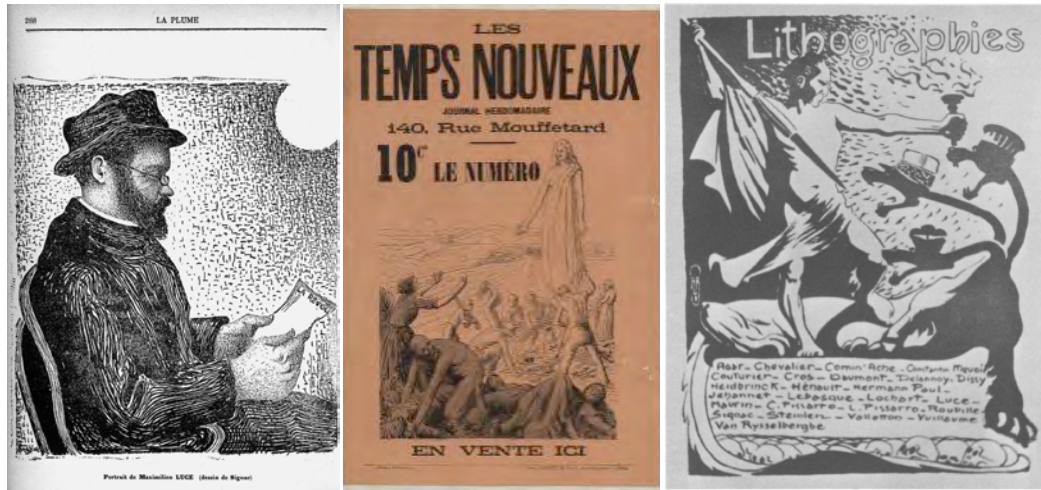


Fig. 106. Paul Signac, *Portrait of Maximilien Luce*, 20 x 17.8 cm, 1891, Fig. 107. Maximilien Luce, *Poster for Les Temps Nouveaux*, 58.5 x 40.5 cm, 1895, Fig. 108. Paul Signac, *Lithographies*, Lithograph, 1896

This would include examples of the illustrations they regularly contributed to Anarchist-Communist periodicals including *La Révolté* and *Les Temps nouveaux* (shown above).⁴ It would further include correspondence between the Neo-Impressionists and leading Anarchist-Communists such as those between Camille Pissarro and Jean Grave in order to signify the closeness of the relationship. And, finally, it would include documentation relating to Luce's imprisonment for 42 days in 1894 as part of the infamous 'Procès de Trente' (trial of the thirty) for violating the *lois scélérates* (villainous laws) that outlawed the publication of visual art with anarchist themes.⁵ Luce produced a series of lithographs entitled *Mazaz* about his experience in the prison and as part of the Parisian police's attempt to identify anarchists in the lead up to the trial, he was also the subject of the first ever police mug shots, taken by the French police officer Alphonse Bertillon.⁶ These mug shots

⁴ Luce, in particular, was a very close friend of Jean Grave, the editor of *La Révolté*, and was even pictured reading this magazine, by Signac in a drawing that was used for the cover of *Les Hommes d'aujourd'hui* in 1890 and reproduced a year later in *La Plume* (shown above). Signac contributed five drawings and two lithographs, including one, shown above, of an anarchist artist slaying a three-headed capitalist dragon with his brush, which featured as the cover of the *Les Temps nouveaux* from 1898-1900. The Neo-Impressionists, that had the means to do so, also provided financial support to Grave for his publication, Henri Edmond Cross, for example donated money by selling watercolours. The debts of the magazine were paid off twice by Pissarro, Henri Edmond Cross donated money by selling watercolours and Signac made regular donations of money and made a gift of his works for five lotteries between 1895 and 1912. For more on this see: Donald Drew Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts in Western Europe*, p.241

⁵ As part of this campaign Camille Pissarro went abroad to escape arrest stating 'Since the last law passed by the French government it is absolutely impossible for anyone to be safe.' The leaders of all of the major anarchist journals in Paris – Émile Pouget, of *Père Peinard*; Jean Grave of *La Révolte*; and Sebastian Faure, of *La Libertaire*, along with Felix Fénéon were put in the dock, leading to the anarchist press being almost eliminated for a short time around 1894. However after the acquittal of all of the principal defendants, the major reviews began to reappear. For more on this see: John Hutton, *Neo-Impressionism and the Search for Solid Ground*, 1994, pp.49-50

⁶ Bertillon developed a scientific classification system for criminal suspects based on physical measurements that was taken up across the world to try and capture anarchist revolutionaries. Bertillon realised that non-standardised photographs were futile for identification and advocated using a scientifically exact form of photography that involved taking well-lit, full-face shots and profiles, and thus is credited with inventing the mug shot. Luce's mugshot, together with those of Fénéon and Grave are part of an album of albumen prints of mugshots of suspected anarchists taken by Bertillon held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The inclusion of these photographs in the exhibition would provide further testimony of Luce's

are available to borrow in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and can therefore be exhibited alongside the *Mazaz* series to demonstrate Luce's commitment to Anarchist-Communist politics. Exhibiting this collection of contextual material would clearly relate to the viewer the significant relationship between the Neo-Impressionists and the Anarchist-Communists in late nineteenth-century France. It should also communicate that Paul Signac and Maximilien Luce were the most committed of the Neo-Impressionists to Anarchist-Communism and thus highlight the reason why their paintings will feature most predominantly in the rest of the display.⁷



Fig.109. (Left) Alphonse Bertillon, Mugshots of Suspected Anarchists from French Police Files, 1891–95, Albumen silver print from glass negative and gelatin silver print, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Left to Right: 258. Luce, Maximilien, 64. Fénéon, Felix, 187. Grave, Jean). Fig. 110. Maximilien Luce with text by Jules Vallés, *Mazaz*, lithograph, 1894, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Following on from this, we would also need to demonstrate how the Anarchist-Communists planned to realise their ideal society. Unlike Marxist-Communists they believed that centrally planned collective production would limit individual creativity and would therefore have the same alienating affects as capitalist modes of industrial production. Instead they looked to autonomous rural communes and artisanal co-operatives, which functioned through a form of more 'organic' collectivism based on voluntary cooperation and mutual aid, as their model for their 'good society'. This model was comprised of small independent but interrelated communes. In these communes the inhabitants would work and live together co-operatively and mutually and have equal status, but there would be an emphasis on individual autonomy and freedom and the absolute minimum of governance. This model for the 'good society' was frequently depicted in Neo-Impressionists paintings. For example, artisanal labour was the subject for Signac's *The Milliners* (1885-86) and for Luce's *Morning, Interior* (1890) and *The Toilet* (1887) and rural communal labour was the subject of Camille Pissarro's *Apple Picking at Éragny-sur-*

involvement in anarchist politics: <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/190040193?rpp=20&pg=1&ft=%22luce%2c+maximilien%22&pos=4> (accessed on 20/11/2011).

⁷ Signac went as far as to tell Jean Grave in a letter in 1916 that 'nourished by your principles, by those of Reclus, by those of Kropotkin... it is you who have formed me' Robert L. and Eugenia W. Herbert, 'Artists and Anarchism: Unpublished Letters of Pissarro, Signac and Others', p. 479 in Donald Drew Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts in Western Europe*, p. 241

Epte (1888), Charles Angrand's *The Harvesters* (1892) and Henri Edmond-Cross's *The Grape Harvest* (1892).⁸



Fig.111. Henri Edmond Cross, *The Grape Harvest (Var) (Vendages (Var))*, 1892, oil on canvas, 95 x 140 cm, Collection of Robbi and Bruce Toll

These paintings all illustrate the Anarchist-Communist idyll and could thus be shown in order to communicate their utopic vision to the audience. However, the difficulty in this approach is that we are aiming to concentrate on how the uniquely Anarchist-Communist idea of an ideal collectivist society affected the way Neo-Impressionists made their work and carried out their practice rather than focusing on the subject-matter of their paintings. This does not mean that these paintings should not be shown in the exhibition, as they provide a way in to understanding what exactly the Anarchist-Communist collective idyll was. However, it does mean that we need to find a method of asserting that it is not only the subject-matter of these works that is the focus of this display but also the way in which they were made.

One means of doing this is to foreground these works with a display of contextual information that demonstrated how the Neo-Impressionists were further influenced by the Anarchist-Communist reimagining of urban-artisanal and rural-communal co-operative labour in the development of their own collaborative and mutual aid networks for artists. As part of this political agenda they opened a co-operative gallery called the blue boutique (*boutique bleue*) on Rue Laffitt in 1893. It was organised around Anarchist-Communist principals, allowing 'everyone to have the same rights' and created a mechanism for artists to operate outside of the

⁸ Of the Neo-Impressionists only Maximilien Luce, depicted the same type of collectivity and communal working in industrial landscapes. This is perhaps due to Luce's more all-encompassing and open leftist political views, which saw him supporting both anarcho-syndicalist and socialist causes in addition to anarchist-communism. The anarcho-syndicalists were part of the growing trade union movement that had been neglected by anarcho-communists who felt that bargaining for wage increases or small improvements in working conditions was ultimately fruitless as it involved complicity with the capitalist system that was founded on the exploitation of the worker.⁸ In Luce's paintings of the Belgian industrial region of Charleroi, industrial workers are depicted as heroes, bathed in the glowing light of the furnaces.

commercial dealer system, have autonomy around how their work was sold, whilst contributing to a more egalitarian and mutually beneficial venture.⁹ Another example of the Neo-Impressionists involvement in artists' co-operatives was their engagement with the *Société des Artistes Indépendants*, founded in 1884.¹⁰ Signac and Luce were both presidents of the co-operative, which provided an alternative to the salon by means of decentralised structure that operated a programme of open and juryless, public exhibitions. It also had a mutual aid scheme in the form of a social fund collected through subscriptions and annual fee that was used to help its poorer members get through economic hardship. Luce, himself, was a beneficiary of this scheme when Signac organised a monthly subscription fund specifically to help him continue painting after financial destitution almost brought an abrupt halt to his career.



Fig. 112. *Société des Artistes Indépendants* members, Photograph, Signac Archives, Paris.

However, as the development of these co-operative networks and exhibition platforms is not visible in the final form of the artworks, we must display objects, either photographs or letters that provide visible evidence of these cooperative ventures. This could include photographs of the *boutique bleue* and *Société des Artistes Indépendants*, such as the one above, and also letters like those between Signac and Camille Pissarro, which discuss the economic hardship funds and other mutual aid mechanisms, that the Neo-Impressionists employed.¹¹ The accompanying short text labels, and titles, that accompany individual works will allow the opportunity to succinctly articulate further necessary information without

⁹ Signac described the principles of the boutique to Pissarro in a letter of late 1893 excerpted in Reynolds, John, ed., Camille Pissarro, *Letters to his Son Lucien*, Santa Barbara, California, Peregrine Smith, 1981 pp. 283-4.

¹⁰ It would be difficult to represent this part of the neo-impressionists practice within the exhibition, in anyway other than through documentation. The documentation materials available to exhibit include photographs of the *Société des Artistes Indépendants* members and their exhibitions and an invitation to the *boutique bleue*. These are located in the Signac Archives in Paris.

¹¹ In a letter written by Signac to Camille Pissarro, 10 February 1899, in Janine Bailly-Herzberg (ed.), *Correspondance de Camille Pissarro*, vol. 5: 1899-1903, Paris, Editions de Valhermeil, 1991, p 20.

resorting to longer wall texts, which can be strenuous to read. This is therefore one method we could use to demonstrate that Anarchist-Communist collectivist values impacted on the way Neo-Impressionists worked together cooperatively without resorting to collective production on the level of individual works.

However, these objects can only ever be contextual, and it is our aim to provide examples of artworks which themselves have something to say about collective practice. It is therefore important that the display focuses on the most significant impact that Anarchist-Communist collectivist values had on the Neo-Impressionists, which is their development of a collective methodology based on rationalized scientific principles for the individual production of artworks. This foregrounding of methodology would, importantly, be demonstrable through the display of key artworks together with contextual documentation that further elucidates the scientific and political basis for the development of this method. Furthermore, it is in keeping with the Neo-Impressionists own assessment of the primary value of their collective work. As Signac articulated in a lecture in 1902 that reflected Kropotkin's writings on the role of the artist:

The anarchist painter is not one who will show anarchist paintings, but one who without regard for lucre, without desire for reward, will struggle... against bourgeois and official conventions... The subject is nothing, or at least is only one part of the work of art, not more important than the other elements, colour, drawing, composition ... when the eye is educated, the people will see something other than the subject in pictures. When the society we dream of exists, the worker, freed from the exploiters who brutalize him, will have time to think and to learn. He will appreciate the different qualities of the work of art.¹²

This quote effectively encapsulates the main point of the exhibition: that an artist's political beliefs are not only materialized in the subject matter of their work but in the way they make their work and carry out their practice. This quote should therefore also be used as a prominent wall text in the display, in addition to the Kropotkin quote, as it provides clear evidence that they considered their methodology and their wider practice to be politicized as much as their subject matter.

The Neo-Impressionists development of a rationalised scientific technique was, aimed at realising several different important objectives influenced by Anarchist-Communism, and must therefore be clearly articulated in the exhibition. Firstly, it was intended to challenge the romantic idea of the artist as an individual genius, who expressed their emotions through gestural brushstrokes, by demonstrating how a scientific, objective system could be used to construct images. Most importantly, this method would thus allow a community of artists, united by shared political values and objectives, to produce a collective statement through the application of a uniform technique, whilst still retaining the autonomy of producing their work on an individual basis and with the freedom to portray anything they wished in whatever way, within this system of articulation: an application of the Anarchist-Communist idea of individual autonomy within collective harmony.

¹² Robert L. and Eugenia W. Herbert, 'Artists and Anarchism: Unpublished Letters of Pissarro, Signac and Others', p. 479

Secondly, the pointillist technique, involving the application of individual, separate brushstrokes that combined to create a harmonious image, was intended to visually communicate to the viewer the Anarchist-Communist idea that collective harmony and individual autonomy were mutually symbiotic. Finally, the direct application of the scientist Charles Henry's dynamogenic methods to the construction of their images was aimed at stimulating a more harmonious state of mind in the viewer and thus directly changing the way people would relate to each other within a community. As these points are so fundamental to what we are trying to articulate in the exhibition, it is therefore crucial that the display of their work, effectively communicates the collectivist impulse behind the development of this scientific technique. Although, these ideas are to some extent made manifest in the paintings themselves, particularly with regard to the second point, it must be assumed that not every visitor would know which scientific principals their technique was based on or how this relates to Anarchist-Communism. It is therefore critically important that we provide the contextual information that allows the audience to understand these key points. I will therefore now outline the contextual information necessary to communicate these points and examine which paintings best communicate the Anarchist-Communist ideal of autonomy in collective harmony through the spatial configuration of the canvas, the application of Charles Henry's dynamogenic principles and the choice of subject.

Paul Signac must be positioned, in the display, as the chief theoretician of Neo-Impressionism as a collective movement united *by* Anarchist-Communist values and united *through* the application of specific scientific techniques. Although, it was Seurat who first formulated much of the scientific methodologies of the divisionist technique, it was Signac who first created an aesthetico-political theoretical framework, which enmeshed aesthetic, scientific and Anarchist-Communist theory and provided a collective social and political goal for the wider Neo-Impressionist movement to work towards as a harmonious community of artists. Signac understood that the application of scientific principles to the production of painting could be used to challenge the romantic individualism and perceived social uselessness of Impressionism. He considered the idea of the brush-stroke as a mode of gestural self-expression to be counter-productive to what he considered an immediate need to use art to further the development of the 'good society' proposed by Anarchist-Communism. Signac recognised that Georges Seurat's innovative new technique of pointillism, based, in turn, on newly developed colour theories by leading chemists in France such as Michel Eugène Chevreul could be combined with the dynamogenic principles of Charles Henry to formulate a highly rationalised process of image production. This would enable the group to move beyond the romantic notion of the artists as genius, by repressing both the individualistic brushstroke and the personality of the artist in favour of pure rationalised technique.¹³ His work, and his correspondence with other artists from the group, will therefore feature prominently in the display.

The contextual display will feature pertinent passages or diagrams in Anarchist-Communist publications, which express the idea of the atomistic but harmonious society. This is intended to demonstrate that the Neo-Impressionists' adoption of a

¹³ Donald Drew Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts in Western Europe*, p. 238

scientific methodology was influenced by the theories and in particular the language use of Anarchist-Communists in relation to collectivism that they encountered through the Anarchist periodicals and published writings of Kropotkin. It was Kropotkin's use of scientific discourse that most distinguished his theories from other Anarchist thinkers such as Bakunin and Proudhon and he used this terminology to counter the common Marxist accusation that anarchism was utopian and therefore irrelevant. In particular, French Anarchist-Communist theories were framed around the theories of political ecology, which advocated the idea of social progress based on organicist and natural laws that are governed by chemical and biological principles. The idea of society as a harmonious organic whole, comprised of individual interrelated parts was used to justify the idea that if individuals were allowed freedom to develop without 'artificial' state or institutional intervention, they would naturally form harmonious and balanced societies – the idea of harmony through autonomy.¹⁴ These ideas were underpinned and rationalised by chemical and biological metaphors. For example, healthy societies were imagined as aggregates of atoms or molecules each of which was unique and autonomous but gravitated naturally toward others to form balanced assemblies – a 'solidarity of equals'.¹⁵ We can show examples of this by including relevant pages of Anarchist-Communist periodicals in our display cases. However as this scientific discourse usually took verbal rather than visual form we could also provide facsimile copies of excerpts from Kropotkin's speeches, Joseph Dejacques's, *L'Humanisphere* and Leon Bourgeois, *Solidarité*, in the seated areas, which people could read through at their leisure.¹⁶ Another method of visually signifying this would be to repeat these diagrams on the floor of the space, to reinforce the importance of the atomistic conception of collectivism and the idea of a 'solidarity of equals'.

It was similarly the scientific principles of the Neo-Impressionist technique that meant that it was a mode of production that could be taught and thus shared and utilised by a whole community of artists working independently towards a shared political goal. The creation of a rationalised technique based on scientific principles was thus for the first time used to create a politicised arts practice and it is this that will connect this episode to the episodes on Equipo 57 and GRAV. It is therefore critically important that there is a display of contextual information that demonstrates how specific scientific principals informed the development of the divisionist methodology. This display would feature the diagrams that illustrated the theories of those scientists who most significantly influenced the development of the Neo-Impressionist technique. This would include those by; Michel Eugène Chevreul, that explored the vibratory and intensifying effects of juxtaposing complementary colours, Charles Blanc who expanded on these ideas of colour

¹⁴ For more on this see: Robyn Roslak, *Neo-Impressionism and Anarchism in Fin-de-Siècle France*, 2007, pp 16-30

¹⁵ 'Chemical language of this sort appeared in every genre of anarchist communication, from politically sophisticated journals like *La Revue libertaire*, where Grave's friend Charles Malato described an egalitarian social fabric as a network of 'human molecules', to public lectures such as Kropotkin's in 1894 in which he identified the characteristic behaviour of atoms and molecules "the infinitely small, associating among themselves but keeping their own life' in Robyn Roslak, *Neo-Impressionism and Anarchism in Fin-de-Siècle France*, 2007, p. 21.

¹⁶ An example of this is the use of atomic structures and ideas to describe a fictional anarchist utopia in Joseph Dejacques's, *L'Humanisphere* of 1859. See: Joseph Dejacques, *L'Humanisphere*, 1859, (Les temps Nouveaux, Brussels, 1899), p. 56. (There is a copy of this book in the British Library and Oxford University Library) Another example is Leon Bourgeois' preferred biological metaphors such as the way that individual cells combined to form harmonious and functioning organisms, as the basis for his social doctrine of Solidarism, see: Leon Bourgeois, *Solidarité*, A. Collin, Paris, 1896, There is a copy of his text, *Solidarité* in the British Library. Examples from: Robyn Roslak, *Neo-Impressionism and Anarchism in Fin-de-Siècle France*, 2007, p. 21.

contrast and their optical effects and Ogden Rood, who advised artists to use an optical, rather than actual, mixture of colour in order to stimulate the viewers senses and intensify the brilliance and vibrancy of their paintings.¹⁷ We can therefore show examples of diagrams such as the one's below by Chevreul and Rood as part of this display.

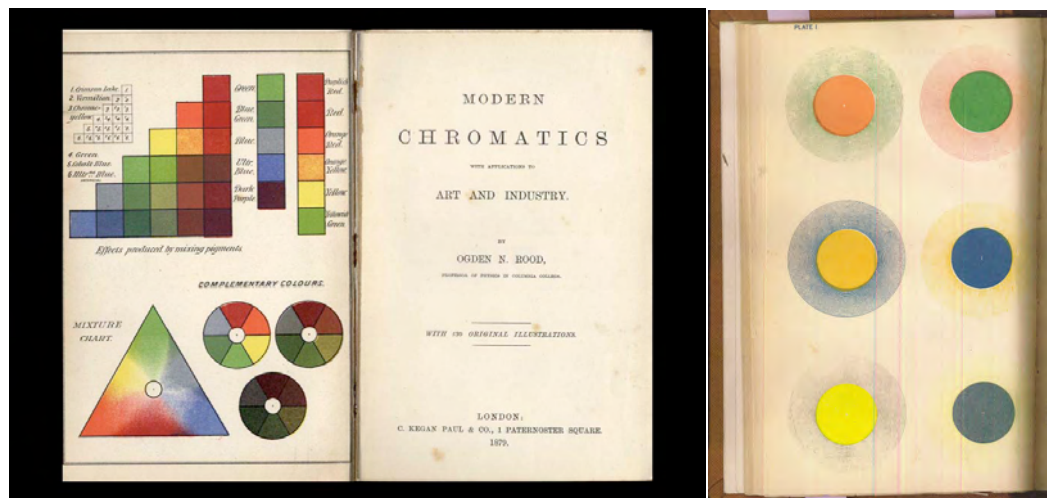


Fig. 113. (Left) Ogden Rood, *Modern Chromatics*, 1879 and Fig. 114 (right) Eugène Chevreul, *Cercles chromatiques de M.E. Chevreul*, 1855

However, it is Signac's relationship with the psycho-physician and polymath, Charles Henry that is the most important for this exhibition as he had the greatest influence on the idea that the formal properties of a painting, and specifically the pointillist technique could actually create collective harmony. Henry combined both empirical and ideological ideas to argue that there was a psychological, and thus moral, dimension to colour and its application. His texts, *Introduction à une esthétique scientifique* of 1885 and *Le Cercle chromatique* of 1889 attempted to prove that by utilising specific colour combinations in specific linear configurations it was possible to stimulate a harmonious state of consciousness called 'dynamogenous' in the viewer.¹⁸ Artists that adopted his theories as part of their process of image production could therefore have a positive impact on both the individual viewer and wider society by creating the psychological conditions for the idea of collective harmony espoused by the Anarchist-Communists.¹⁹ Henry even produced two instruments that could be used by artists to apply his principles scientifically to their artistic processes. The first was called the *Aesthetic Protractor*, which provided the artist with an instrument for plotting rhythmical lines that would promote agreeable sensations for the viewer.²⁰ The second was based on Chevreul's *Cercle Chromatique* and adopted the same name. Henry incorporated his theories about the emotional content of colour and the relationship between colour and linear direction into the colour wheel, in order to provide a rationalised device for artists to use to determine harmonious colour relations for use in their work.²¹

¹⁷ For more on this see: William Innes Homer, *Seurat and the Science of Painting*, (M.I.T Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1964)

¹⁸ Charles Henry, *Le Cercle chromatique*, Verdin, Paris, 1888 and Charles Henry, *Introduction à une esthétique scientifique*, Paris, 1888 First editions are held at the Courtauld Institute, Oxford, British Library and Glasgow University.

¹⁹ William Innes Homer, *Seurat and the Science of Painting*, 1964, pp 188-216

²⁰ Charles Henry, *Rapporteur esthétique*, G. Séguin, Paris, 1888

²¹ Charles Henry, *Le Cercle chromatique*, Verdin, Paris, 1888

However, this relationship was not one-sided and Signac himself contributed to the development of Henry's theories and tools by working as his 'obedient collaborator' providing measurements, calculations and analysis of hues and harmonies.²² He even illustrated several of Henry's books, working up plates for him in his spare time, including *L'Education du sens des formes* (1891), *Cercle Chromatique* (1889) and *Rapporteur esthétique* (1888). Signac also produced a small lithograph in 1888, entitled 'Application du Cercle chromatique de Mr. Ch. Henry'²³ that was produced to jointly advertise Henry's book and the radical Theatre Libre. This should thus be included in the display, as it applied Henry's theories directly and is evidence of the mutually beneficial relationship.

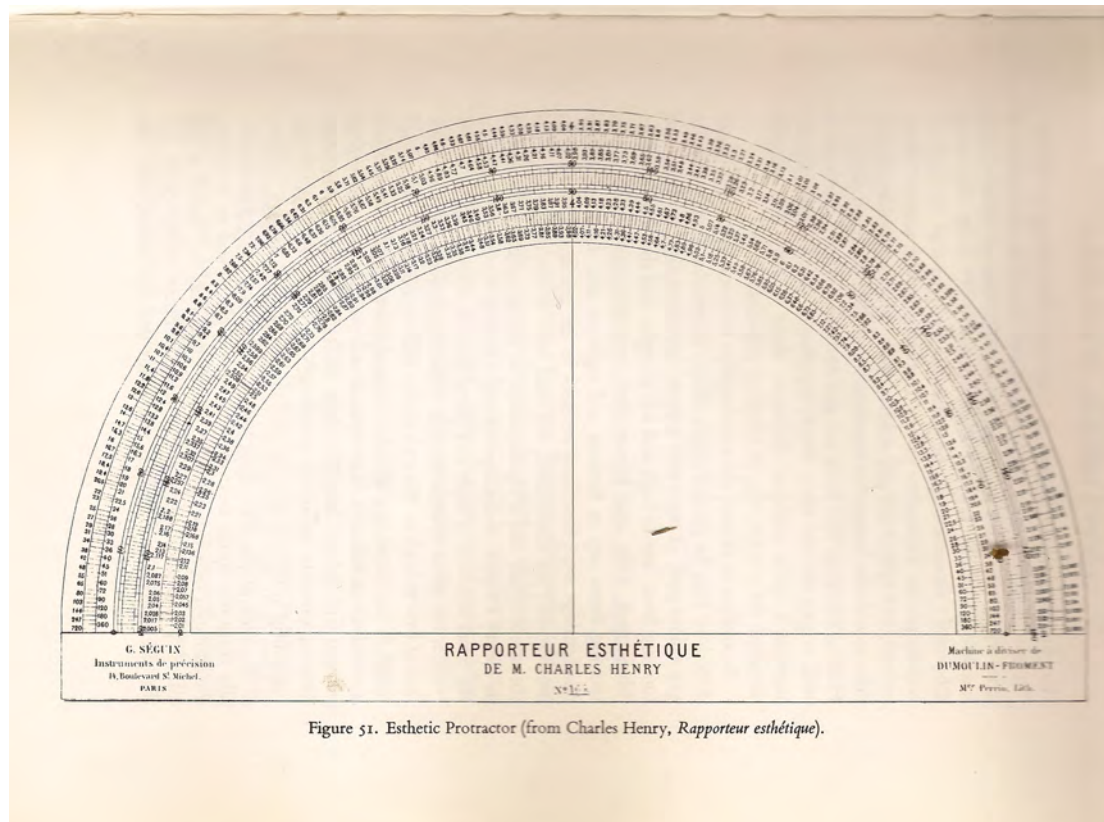


Figure 51. Esthetic Protractor (from Charles Henry, *Rapporteur esthétique*).

Fig. 115. Charles Henry, *Aesthetic Protractor*, 1888 (From: Henry, Charles, *Rapporteur esthétique*, G. Séguin, Paris, 1888)

It would also be possible to include correspondence between the Anarchist-Communist theoreticians, the scientists and the Neo-Impressionists or to even incorporate a network diagram, which demonstrates this interconnectedness diagrammatically. Furthermore, the portrait of the Anarchist-Communist art critic Felix Fénéon by Signac, entitled *Opus 217*, should be shown in the exhibition for two reasons. Firstly, the painting materialises Charles Henry's theories: the background of the painting comprises of vividly contrasting colours and dynamic outwardly projecting forms that exemplify the methods he described and relate to Henry's recently published *Cercle Chromatique*. And secondly, it communicates the

²² Signac described his collaboration with Henry as follows: 'Around 1890 I was his obedient collaborator. After my day of painting, I worked on his *Rapporteur esthétique* and *Cercle Chromatique* for him, analysing or calculating lengths, rhythms, hues and harmonies.' *Cahiers de l'étoile*, January-February, 1930, p. 72 – in William Innes Homer, *Seurat and the Science of Painting*, 1964, pp. 296-297

²³ The 'T-L' on the lithograph does not unfortunately stand for Tate Liverpool, but instead for Theatre Libre, which was a radical theatre workshop founded by André Antoine. See: http://www.unm.edu/~artmuse/c_prints.html accessed 25.11.11

interrelationship between the Neo-Impressionists (Signac), the Anarchist-Communists (Fénéon) and the scientific community (Henry).



Fig. 116. Paul Signac, *Application du Cercle chromatique de Mr. Ch. Henry, 1888*, Lithograph, image: 155 x 178 mm Sheet: 159 x 186 mm, Bibliothèque nationale de France and Fig. 117. Paul Signac, *Opus 217. Against the Enamel of a Background Rhythmic with Beats and Angles, Tones, and Tints, Portrait of M. Félix Fénéon in 1890*, Oil on canvas, 73.5 x 92.5 cm, MoMA Collection

Now that we have identified what key contextual information will be necessary to communicate the political and scientific basis of the divisionist technique it is important to consider which of the many Neo-Impressionist paintings will best articulate the key Anarchist-Communist idea of individual autonomy through collective harmony and collective harmony through individual autonomy. As previously indicated, the very use of the pointillist technique meant that, on a formal level, every painting articulated this Anarchist-Communist ideal. Robyn Roslak, for example, has argued that the divisionist technique of applying regularly spaced and strongly accentuated brushstrokes of individual colours that are brought together to form a harmonious overall vision, materialised the ideas of 'individual autonomy in collective harmony', 'aggregates of atoms' and a 'solidarity of equals' with great efficacy and artistic economy:

These small and separate touches of paint recall, in turn, the nomenclature of the anarchists' classless social fabric: equal yet autonomous individuals - 'molecules of society' - whose union Grave described as a condition of 'harmony... in infinite variety'.²⁴

Therefore, in principle any painting, regardless of the artist or the subject, could be included in the display. This would also be consistent with the curatorial strategy as a whole, which aims to concentrate on production techniques rather than subject-matter. However, in this particular episode we are aiming to significantly shift the focus away from a well-established and familiar formalist framing of the Neo-Impressionist movement, around Seurat as the innovator of the pointillist technique, towards an understanding of its development as a politicised practice based on the establishment of a collective scientific methodology. As this is such a significant break of convention in the treatment of well-known artists, it is therefore crucial that we select works which are more visibly related to collectivism and that are produced by those Neo-Impressionists most committed to the Anarchist-

²⁴ Robyn Roslak, *Neo-Impressionism and Anarchism in Fin-de-Siècle France*, 2007, p. 25

Communist cause. Paul Signac, Maximilien Luce, Camille and Lucien Pissarro were all active and self-declared Anarchist-Communists and their work should therefore be prioritised; Charles Angrand and Henri Edmond-Cross were less directly politically active in the movement but were nonetheless supporters and their work should therefore be considered.

Paul Signac's *In the Time of Harmony: The Golden Age Has Not Passed it is Still to Come*, is a critical work to include as it is the most overt neo-impressionist depiction of a future anarchist society modelled on the rural idyll. The painting had the working title *In the Time of Anarchy* and was intended to propagate the theories of Anarchist-Communists like Reclus who believed that anarchist utopia could be achieved by drawing on the communal rural practices of the past in combination with new scientific developments so that the most disagreeable labour could be consigned to the past and there was ample time for leisure and personal fulfilment. This ideal is visualised by Signac in the painting through the mechanised farm equipment present in the background, and the image of the happy smiling sower and the circle of dancers Signac described as a 'farandole of harvesters'.²⁵ The commune is however, pictured predominately as a place where people have the leisure time to develop their creative and intellectual interests including painting, reading and dance and have the freedom from toil to enjoy themselves.



Fig. 118. Paul Signac, *In the Time of Harmony: The Golden Age Is Not in the Past, It Is in the Future*, *Au temps de l'harmonie-L'Age d'or n'est pas dans le passe, il est dans l'avenir*, 1893-95, Oil on canvas, 300 x 400 cm, Montreuil, Mairie

However, it is not just the narrative content of these painting that confers the anarchist-communist ideal. The use of the pointillist techniques also means that the subjects in the painting, the rural labourers, are fully integrated into the landscape as the surface pattern ensures there is no distinction between foreground and

²⁵ Marina Ferretti-Bocquillion, Signac et Saint-Tropez, 1892-1913, p. 52 in Robyn Roslak, *Neo-Impressionism and Anarchism in Fin-de-Siècle France*, 2007, p. 146

background, both are on an equal plane. Their technique therefore reinforces the Anarchist-Communist belief in equality and natural harmony between man and his environment. Furthermore the use of the arabesque, which leads the viewer's eye fluidly and dynamically around the image, in combination with the pointillist technique, was based on the dynamogenic theories of Henry that advocated the use of dynamic line and contrasting colours to enable the active engagement of a viewer with the subject.²⁶ The idea of combining overtly Anarchist-Communist subject-matter with this technique was that it would stimulate feelings of wellbeing and harmony in the viewer that would be, from then on, associated with the image of the Anarchist-Communist collective idyll. The technique would also open up the viewers field of perception, and thus expand their idea of what was possible whilst simultaneously feeding them an image of what the Anarchist-Communists believed *was possible*. Signac was thus making specific use of these optical techniques in an attempt to actively transform the state of mind of individual viewers in order to precondition them to, and then deliver to them an image of, Anarchist-Communist ideology.

With this project, Signac was also aiming to kick-start a move away from the application of the divisionist technique to the canvas, which he saw as a bourgeois and commodifiable form. Instead, he aimed to investigate whether the divisionist technique was applicable to larger scale public murals and frescoes where it could perform a social function and resist commodification. *In the Time of Harmony* was originally produced with the intention that it would become a public mural for the Maison du Peuple, then under construction in Brussels, and would serve as a propagandistic image of the Anarchist-Communist collective idyll.²⁷ As part of this aim, he also encouraged Henri Edmond Cross to attempt the application of pointillism to a large mural painting that depicted the Anarchist-Communist Arcadian idyll. The result was Cross's arabesque painting *The Evening Air*. These two paintings were the subject of a large volume of correspondence of between the two artists that clarify the aims of the project and the difficulties they had in achieving the optical effects they wanted on such large-scale. In one letter, of summer 1893, at the beginning of the project, Cross explained why he felt that the large-scale murals would perfectly reflect the ideology of Anarchist-Communism specifically:

Your idea of a large canvas is perfect... Until now, the pictures dealing with the theme of anarchy always depicted revolt either directly or indirectly, through scenes of poignant misery. Let us imagine instead the dreamed-age of happiness and well-being and let us show the actions of men, their play and their work in this era of general harmony.²⁸

As the quote signifies the two artists were attempting to challenge the popular perception of Anarchism as a solely destructive and revolutionary force by instead positioning Anarchist-Communism as an ideology with a positive definable social outcome and to invest this outcome with a degree of permanence and solidity.

These two paintings can thus be juxtaposed in the display in order to communicate how the collective scientifically derived methodology of Neo-Impressionists was

²⁶ Robyn Roslak, *Neo-Impressionism and Anarchism in Fin-de-Siècle France*, 2007, p 166

²⁷ Vivien Greene (ed.), *Divisionism/Neo-Impressionism: Arcadia and anarchy*, Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin, 2007, p. 36

²⁸ Quoted in Signac, 1863-1935 MOMA book – pg 196 (look up)

applied to the production of paintings depicting the anarchist-communist ideal of 'harmony in autonomy'. The letters between the two artists will also be displayed in order to demonstrate the communal sharing of ideas whilst working autonomously that is analogous to the artisanal working practices that both the Anarchist-Communists and the Neo-Impressionists espoused.

As the two paintings above clearly demonstrate, the Neo-Impressionists often used decorative or 'arabesque' motifs in their work. However, in the exhibition it is difficult to present the argument made by Robyn Roslak that they did this in order to increase the appreciation of artisanal labour and production and to elevate the status of the artisan in line with the artist.²⁹ However as previously indicated, artisanal labour also became the subject of several Neo-Impressionist paintings. The display will therefore also feature two key examples that aim to raise the status of artisanal labour through the combination of technique and subject matter. The first of these is Signac's *Milliners*, which highlighted the precarious reality of the artisans by forcing the viewer to actively engage with and almost participate in the labour of their work, through optical stimulation and dynamic composition that required the eye of the viewer to mix the colours. Similarly, the level of detail and craft in the painting, in the careful and precise build up of tiny brushstrokes of contrasting colours mirrors the level of craftsmanship taking place in the image of the milliners.



Fig. 119 Henri-Edmond Cross, *The Evening Air*, c. 1893, Oil on canvas, 116 x 164 cm Musée d'Orsay, Paris

The second is *Morning, Interior* by Maximilien Luce. Rather than stressing the deprivation or hardships of artisanal labour, Luce instead sought to depict the quiet dignity and skill of his friend's work and used the neo-impressionist technique to lend beauty and elegance to incidental details of their everyday home lives. In these paintings Luce sought to advocate the principles of autonomy that characterised

²⁹ For more on this see: Robyn Roslak, *Neo-Impressionism and Anarchism in Fin-de-Siècle France*, 2007,

the artisanal life and used the pointillist technique to reinforce the atmosphere of control and order that the men pictured had over their lives in spite of their modest means. Likewise, his use of dynamic lighting and strong colour in the depiction of the architectural gilder, Gustave Perrot in *Morning, Interior*, 1890, invests the simple scene of a man dressing with an almost, religious aura that affirms the status of artisanal labour as the basis for a future Anarchist-Communist society.

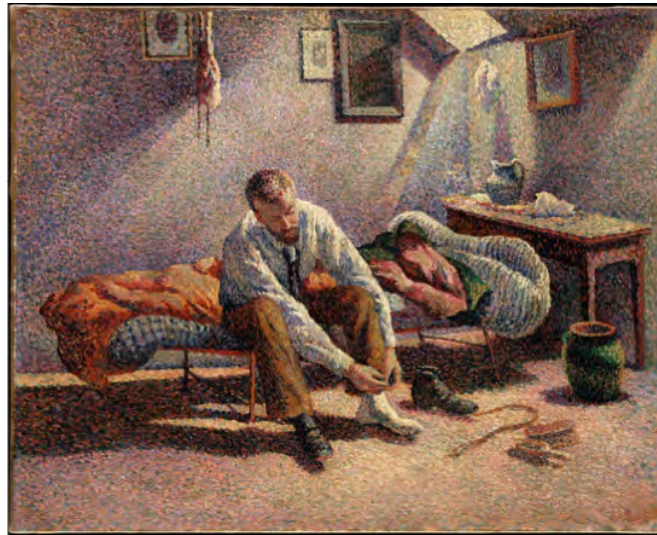
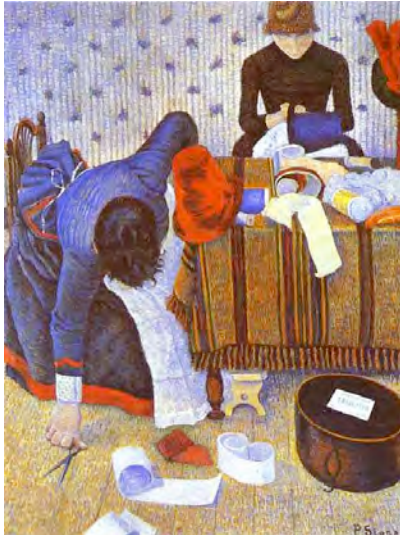


Fig. 120. Paul Signac, *Milliners: Finisher and Trimmer (Fashion)*, 1885-86, 118 x 88 cm, Oil on canvas, Zurich Foundation E. G. Bührle Collection and Fig. 121. Maximilien Luce, *Morning, Interior*, 1890, oil on canvas, 64.8 x 84 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 122. Maximilien Luce, *The Pile Drivers, Quai de la Seine at Billancourt*, 1902-1903. 153 x 195 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

It is also important to include an example from the Charleroi paintings by Maximilien Luce, as he was the only Neo-Impressionist to depict the same type of collectivity and communal working in industrial landscapes and root the value of collectivism in the present day. This is perhaps due to Luce's more all-encompassing and open leftist political views, which saw him supporting both Anarcho-Syndicalist and Socialist causes in addition to Anarchist-Communism. The Anarcho-Syndicalists were part of the growing trade union movement that had been neglected by Anarchist-Communists who felt that bargaining for wage increases or small improvements in working conditions was ultimately fruitless as it involved complicity with the capitalist system that was founded on the exploitation of the worker.³⁰

In Luce's paintings of the Belgian industrial region of Charleroi, industrial workers are depicted as heroes, bathed in the glowing light of the furnaces. Paintings like the *Pile Drivers* utilise the same devices of colour-contrast, pointillism and dynamic lines, derived from Henry and other scientists' theories, that Signac and Cross use to depict the ideal of rural communal living, creating an image of industrial work as harmonious and beautiful. There is an emphasis on co-operative labour, equity amongst workers, time for rest and autonomy –there is no master or boss dictating how the workers precede. Therefore, he roots the Anarchist-Communist ideal of 'autonomy through collective harmony' in the collective bargaining movement of the present day by depicting the industrial labourer as self-determined, autonomous workers, co-operating harmoniously in a collective work.

Finally, it would be important to acknowledge how the politicised technique of divisionism was taken up in countries outside France, including Holland, Belgium and Italy. The pair of divisionist paintings completed in 1889 by Jan Toorop, *Evening Before the Strike (Dark Clouds)* and *After the Strike*, depicting striking labourers were considered for inclusion in the display along with the pointilist works of the Belgians, Henry Van de Velde and Théo Van Rysselberghe.³¹ However, the most consistently politicised works were produced by the Italian divisionists including Emilio Longoni, Guiseppe Pellizzia da Volpedo and Angelo Morbelli. These painters were more directly influenced by writers of the Italian Socialist movement than the French Anarchist-Communists but their aim of defining a shared politicised methodology through which to express collectivist or cooperative politics was consistent with the Neo-Impressionists approach.

I have selected two key Italian Divisionist works for inclusion in the display on the basis that they best articulate this affinity with the Neo-Impressionists political and formal concerns, whilst being firmly rooted in the specific context of the Italian anarcho-socialist struggle. These two works also counter the masculine focus of Luce's paintings of collective production. The first of these paintings is *For Eighty Cents!* (1895) by Morbelli, which depicts the female labourers weeding in the rice fields of Piedmont who infamously worked in appalling conditions. The female rice-workers of Northern Italy were incredibly active in the socialist labour movement during the late nineteenth century, with the first collective strike taking place at

³⁰ John Hutton, *Neo-Impressionism and the Search for Solid Ground*, 1994, pp. 185-190

³¹ The Javanese painter who had moved to Holland as a young man, was at that time influenced by socialist and anarchist politics and took up the technique to depict socially committed subject-matter such as the strike at Charleroi. He later became heavily influenced by the Catholic faith.

Molinella in 1883 to demand small pay increases and improved conditions. The painting thus combines the politicised technique of divisionism with an explicitly socialistic subject and title, through which Morbelli attempted to demonstrate the collective harmony of the women's struggle and to profess his support for it. The painting also raises the question of whether the aesthetic effectiveness in his application of the divisionist technique actually destroys the political message of the subject by rendering the abhorrent working conditions beautiful and making the women seem passive. This makes an interesting comparison to the work of Signac and Cross who chose to portray the future Anarchist-Communist idyll rather than the harsh realities of the present struggle precisely to avoid this conflict between technique and subject.



Fig. 123. Angelo Morbelli, *For Eighty Cents!*, 1895, Oil on canvas, 69 x 124.5 cm. Museo Francesco Borgogna



Fig. 124. Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo *The Fourth Estate (Il quarto stato)* (1901), olio su tela, 293x545 cm, Milano, Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderna

The second painting, I have selected is Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo's *Fourth Estate*, which also depicts the progress of the worker's movement in Northern Italy, provides a further point of comparison. Pelizza similarly represented the

prominence of women in the labour movement, but chose to use divisionism as an active optical technique to enhance his portrayal the worker's as a dynamic autonomous collective force, rather than depicting them as passive victims of harsh conditions. The animated conversations taking place in the scene, for example, portray the movement as a growing force that actively raises class-consciousness. Pellizza then developed a more dynamic relationship between politicised technique and political subject-matter that was mutually symbiotic and it is this combination that has led to it becoming such an iconic symbol of international worker's solidarity. Furthermore a useful quote to include on the wall between the two paintings can be extracted from a letter Pellizza penned to Morbelli concerning the use of the divisionist technique as a politicised practice:

I still remember a painting by (Max) Liebermann, that pig market, which had such a harmonious range of colours that it remains in my brain like a symphony... I don't think, however, that he achieved the aim of modern art, which must be more than a harmony of colour and balance of form: it must be, I say, lofty in concept and human. These are only words, but I can't find any others capable of expressing my thought: I feel now is no longer the time to make art for art's sake, but to make art for humanity; your rice paddy fits in with this new formula, and whatever one may say, this too makes it of value.³²

Here Pellizza is expressing his conviction that the divisionist technique can not function politically in isolation of political subject but must be applied to the depiction of political struggles in order affect the way these social movements are received and perceived. The quote can therefore be used to provoke consideration of whether politicised technique can function when divorced from political subject-matter and contexts.

In conclusion, this treatment of the Neo-Impressionists would allow us to include more of their work and more contextual information and would therefore allow us to build a more compelling argument that their working method was influenced by Anarchist-Communist ideology. This display would give a definitive no to the question posed in the introduction to this case study – is the only artistic application of collectivist values collective production? This display would demonstrate that the Neo-Impressionists undoubtedly developed a shared scientific methodology and a co-operative working practice on the basis of the Anarchist-Communist theory of autonomy through collective harmony and collective harmony through autonomy.

However, in order to make the point more emphatically we must consider how this episode would be positioned in relation to the others. It should be positioned after an episode that demonstrates a more established and conventional understanding of how artists put collectivist values into practice, through the formation of a formalised art collective and through collective production and authorship. This could be after Group Material, Atelier Populaire, Equipo 57 or the International Team of Plastic Artists that came together to produce a mural for the Electricians Syndicate Building in Mexico. They should also be linked to other episodes that also

³² Vivien Greene, *Divisionism/Neo-Impressionism: Arcadia & Anarchy*, Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2007

use their idea of using optical effects as a form of active engagement with the viewer. The Neo-Impressionist display could therefore also be positioned near the Russian constructivists who used similar techniques in an attempt to create a more equal or 'socialist' relationship between consumers and products, or the French collective GRAV who used optical effects part of their investigations into interactive forms of arts practice that actively engage the viewer. The Neo-Impressionist episode would, therefore, provide an exemplary case in point of how artists do not have to author or produce work collectively in order to demonstrate a commitment to collectivist political values in their work. The way this is positioned in the exhibition, as a whole – in relation to other forms of collective production –will ensure that their choice of technique is understood to be related specifically to the political ideology that they espoused.

Appendix 1.b

The Bauhaus Idea and Left-wing Politics

The Bauhaus is included in the exhibition on the basis of Walter Gropius' original *Bauhaus Idea*. This idea was based on the principle of equality between artistic disciplines and, in particular, between the arts and crafts. It was underpinned by the Morris-esque principles of disalienating industrial labour by returning to craft values, and that useful labour can bring pleasure to both the maker and the user. One of Walter Gropius' primary aims when founding the Bauhaus was thus to break down false hierarchies between art and craft, which were in his view determined by class. However, where Gropius differed from Morris was that he wanted to achieve this within the means of production of his own time. He recognised that the value of industrial production as opposed to handicraft lay in its ability to act as a vehicle for collective reception. He did not aim to overthrow industrial production, which could not anyhow be achieved, but instead aimed to imbue the design of industrially produced products with the values and techniques of craftsmanship on the basis that these values would humanise the processes of industrial production and ensure that humanity subordinated the machine for their own needs rather than being ruled by it. This chapter will therefore demonstrate that the *Bauhaus idea* was based on Gropius' socialist values of collectivity and equality and the broad overriding objective of disalienating the making and using of industrial objects.

However, the inclusion of the Bauhaus in the exhibition, presents several curatorial challenges. Firstly, the Bauhaus teachers and students collectively produced a huge body of work, in a number of different disciplines and media and it is therefore difficult to define a refined and representative selection of works that would coherently demonstrate the *Bauhaus idea*. Secondly, it cannot be claimed that all of the teachers and students at the Bauhaus were politically active or motivated by left-wing values. For example, several of the masters at the Bauhaus including Wassily Kandinsky and Johannes Itten were more profoundly influenced by mystical or spiritual philosophies, including Theosophy and the Eastern philosophy of Mazdaznan than secular socialism or Marxism, and these beliefs also had a profound influence on many of the students at the Bauhaus. As we have previously discussed, with reference to Malevich's belief in Theosophy, this does not, on its own, exclude the possibility that these masters were influenced by left-wing values, as Theosophy in particular advocates many socialist principles and can be argued to be a kind of religious socialism, but it does make it difficult to argue that the Bauhaus as collective body represented a cohesive and coherent left-wing vision. In reality, although the Bauhaus was intended by Gropius to be a collective, as an institution it accommodated a multiplicity of different individual views and voices over its short history. Third and finally, Walter Gropius, throughout his life repeatedly tried to play down the idea that the Bauhaus was a political institution with a dogmatic ideology and it is therefore important to consider what his disavowal of the political means in terms of my central argument that Gropius' *Bauhaus Idea* was influenced by left-wing values.

In order to overcome these challenges and present a refined selection of works, this chapter will propose that we use Gropius' *Bauhaus Idea* as a curatorial rationale. The following section will therefore aim to define how left-wing values influenced the founding principles of the Bauhaus as an institution, or what Gropius termed the 'Bauhaus idea' by examining the background of Gropius' involvement in leftist politics and the influences that led him to form the Bauhaus. It will in particular seek to determine how the values of equality and collectivism and the broad aim of disalienating industrial production processes influenced Gropius' idea for the Bauhaus and how he sought to put these principles into practice through the organisation, structuring and working processes of the Bauhaus as an institution. On this basis, it will provide examples of works which helpfully and coherently demonstrate the overall philosophy of the Bauhaus, which was to break down the hierarchies between disciplines and to create a new unity between both the arts and crafts and later between the arts and industrial production to create a socially useful art for the whole people that was befitting of a new socialist society.

Background to the *Bauhaus Idea*

In order to demonstrate in the exhibition how the Bauhaus was influenced by left-wing political values, we need to ensure that it is presented as an institution that was intended to put into practice what Walter Gropius termed the *Bauhaus Idea*. Therefore, rather than representing the Bauhaus through a selection of the most exemplary works by a multiplicity of different individual students and teachers, we need to present a unified body of material that demonstrates the ideas and values of the Bauhaus as an institution. In order to establish that the ideas and values of the Bauhaus were influenced by left-wing politics we need to understand the political values and beliefs of Walter Gropius and establish his involvement in left-wing political arts movements in Germany prior to and during his period at the Bauhaus. We will therefore ground the display with archival material, which highlights Gropius' involvement in both the Novembergruppe and the Arbeitsrat für Kunst

Walter Gropius was, prior to his founding of the Bauhaus, a prominent member of both the pluralistic left-wing arts organisation the Novembergruppe and the more specifically socialist Arbeitsrat für Kunst. The Novembergruppe was formed in Berlin, in 1918, in response to a call by the expressionist painters Max Pechstein and César Klein for radical artists to come together in collaboration with the new socialist German state that had been formed following the November Revolution of 1918, after which the group was named. The members included most of the well-known artists of the time, which although predominantly leftist in orientation represented the broadest spectrum of anti-conservative positions. They included the leftist but non-communist playwright Ernst Toller; and the Communist Berthold Brecht, the expressionist painters Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky and Emil Nolde (who was a mystical-Christian, a racist and latter a Nazi); the architects Bruno Taut, Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, and the composers Kurt Weil (Brecht's chief collaborator) and Alban Berg.¹ This group of broad political views, disciplines and styles were united by a shared belief in the need for a revolutionary art form that was more closely connected to the whole people rather than simply serving the needs of the elite or indeed the aristocracy, and that could exist outside of the

¹ Donald Drew Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts in Western Europe*, Alfred A. Knopff, Inc. New York, 1970, pp. 643-645

capitalist art market through the socialist state's patronage. The group took as its basis for a united decision-making strategy, the key left-wing values of the French Revolution, 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity', which were printed in Capital letters in their manifesto to reinforce their motto for the creation of a new leftist art in Germany. Art Historian Donald Drew Egbert has outlined how the socio-political conditions in Germany at that time, where there was no specific Communist directive, allowed a more pluralistic left-wing alliance of Marxists, anarchists, social democratic and liberal artists to cooperate in order to challenge the hegemony of conservative art forms and institutions.² This provided the unique conditions for not only the formation of the Novembergruppe, but also the Bauhaus, where the aim was unification of political and artistic positions around the new Weimar socialist state and an equality between disciplines, in sharp contrast to the 'anti-art' stance and polemic radical communism espoused by the Berlin Dadaists who denounced the Expressionists and others for continuing bourgeois forms.³

Also in 1918, Gropius, together with César Klein, Otto Bartning and Adolf Behne, founded the Arbeitsrat für Kunst (Workers council for art). Bruno Taut became president of the group in 1918 and collaborated with Gropius on the first manifesto; the 'Architecture Programme', but Gropius was soon to take over, after proving the better organiser. The organisation was named after the 'Arbeitsrat' (Marxist Worker's and Soldier's councils) in order to signal their intention of aligning themselves with the proletariat.⁴ It was founded with the more explicitly political and socialistic aims of reuniting art with the masses and creating an organic and equal unity between all art forms, that rejected the hierarchical distinctions between disciplines and styles:

Art and the people must form a unity. Art shall no longer be the enjoyment of the few but the life and happiness of the masses. The aim is the alliance of the arts under the wing of a great architecture.⁵

The organisation was thus explicitly leftist and the founding members developed a set of guiding principles that were highly reminiscent of William Morris' strategies for democratising the arts. Both Gropius and Taut were highly influenced by Morris' ideas for a socialist art and through the Arbeitsrat they called for a return to craft values and for artists to abandon their 'useless toil' and return to 'handwerk' through which they could become socially useful 'builders' again. Gropius' writing for the Arbeitsrat was couched in Marxist and socialist phraseology: he refers to his colleagues as 'artist-workmen' or 'working people, and as Lauren S. Weingarden points out, Marx also used the term 'handwerk' to refer to how artisans in a future communist city would enact the ideals of Communism.⁶ They called for the development of 'people's housing' and for a government-financed crafts training programme that would help to bring the arts to all the people. Gropius, in particular, supported the idea that a revival of craft values, technique and

² Donald Drew Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts in Western Europe*, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. New York, 1970, pp. 643-645

³ Éva Forgács, *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 1995, p. 20 (See this page for the proclamation 'What is Dadaism and What does it want in Germany.' Signed by Raoul Hausmann, Richard Huelsenbeck and Jefim Golyscheff.

⁴ Donald Drew Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts in Western Europe*, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. New York, 1970, p. 644

⁵ Lauren S Weingarden, *Aesthetics Politicized: William Morris to the Bauhaus*, *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 38, No. 3, Spring, 1985, p. 10

⁶ Lauren S Weingarden, *Aesthetics Politicized: William Morris to the Bauhaus*, *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 38, No. 3, Spring, 1985, p. 10

organisation would lead to the breaking down of hierarchies between artistic disciplines, between the fine arts and craft and thus to the creation of a more socially useful and accessible socialist art.

As part of the 'Architecture Programme' of the Arbeitsrat, Bartning proposed that the old system of professorships should be abolished and that the old system of master and apprenticeship be restored as part of a wider drive to overturn the bourgeois value systems enforced through the academy.⁷ In this way, a return to a system of the middle ages, was claimed as a radically new and socialistic avant-garde strategy aimed at challenging bourgeois and conservative art forms, in a manner reminiscent of the 'Donkey's Tail' group in Russia who proclaimed that 'our future is behind us!' In 1919, members of the Novembergruppe joined together with the Arbeitsrat in preparing, in pamphlet form, a kind of manifesto entitled *An alle Künstler (To all artists!)* with woodcut illustrations by Pechstein, Hans Richter and three other artists. After the introduction by leftist writer Johannes Becher, came a 'call to socialism', which advocated a specific form of utopian socialism and asserted 'we desire to achieve through the socialist republic not only the recovery of conditions of art, but also the beginning of a unified artistic era for our time'.⁸

Pechstein believed that the training of people from all classes in crafts would lead towards a new artistic epoch in which there would be no separation between the arts and crafts but an organic and socially significant synthesis of them all – an epoch therefore similar to Marx's classless society. This desire for a new democratic and socialist art was summed up in a book of essays entitled *Ja! Stimmen des Arbeitsrates für Kunst in Berlin (Yes! Votes for the Workers Council for Art in Berlin)* 1919.⁹ The book presented the results of a questionnaire issued by the Arbeitsrat to cross-disciplinary art practitioners and art historians about how best to proceed in the creation of this new art in collaboration with the socialist state. This included questions around whether a socialist art should be collectively produced, whether it should be anonymous, what the relationship between fine and applied arts should be, and what the state role in supporting the development of a new art ought to be. These questions were often couched in a broadly Marxist phraseology such as: 'how can the broad masses of the art proletariat be recruited for the manual crafts and how can he escape annihilation in the in the impending economic catastrophe?'¹⁰ According to Donald Drew Egbert, the unanimous reply backed up Bartning's proposal for a return to the craft and apprentice-based system of training rather than academic teaching.¹¹ The results of this questionnaire therefore convinced Gropius' that the best way to put Bartning's rather vague proposals for a return to craft-based training into practice was through the creation of a new style of art school and this thus paved the way for the creation of the Bauhaus.

The Bauhaus was thus conceived by Gropius as one part of a cohesive body of work he was doing at the Arbeitsrat, which aimed to create a unified socialist art. The

⁷ Éva Forgács, *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 1995, pp. 16-17

⁸ *An Alle Künstler!* Berlin, 1919, p. 19, translation from Peter Selz, *German Expressionist Paintings*, Berkley, California, 1957, p.313.

⁹ *Ja! Stimmen des Arbeitsrates für Kunst in Berlin*, 1919, Charlottenburg, Berlin, 1919 (A facsimile edition of this book is included in the catalogue of an exhibition held at Akademie der Künste (Berlin), 29 June - 3 Aug. 1980 also entitled *Ja! Stimmen des Arbeitsrates für Kunst in Berlin*).

¹⁰ Quoted in Helmut Lehmann-Haupt, *Art Under a Dictatorship*, Oxford University Press, 1954 p.18 (From Donald Drew Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts in Western Europe*, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. New York, 1970, p. 645)

¹¹ Donald Drew Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts in Western Europe*, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. New York, 1970, p. 645

Bauhaus would operate as the government-financed crafts training programme that the Arbeitsrat called for and it would be organised according to the master-apprentice system that Otto Bartning advocated.¹² It is therefore important to establish in the exhibition the importance of Gropius' involvement of both the Novembergruppe and the Arbeitsrat. This is particularly important as recent Bauhaus exhibitions, including those held at both the Barbican and MoMA have failed to demonstrate the origins of the Bauhaus in these two radical groups and have thus depoliticised their representations of the Bauhaus.

The *Bauhaus Idea*

The original manifesto for the Bauhaus was written whilst Gropius was chairman of the Arbeitsrat and it thus articulated that organisation's key aims. This manifesto demonstrates that Gropius conceived of the Bauhaus as a means of shaping the direction of the younger generation both artistically and ideologically, so that they could put the *Bauhaus Idea* into practice in their professional careers and thus save society from the continuation of useless bourgeois forms and create a more purposeful and useful form of art for a socialist society:

Today the arts exist in isolation, from which they can be rescued only through conscious, cooperative effort of all craftsmen. Architects, painters, and sculptors must recognise anew and learn to grasp the composite character of a building both as an entity and in its separate parts...When young people who take a joy in artistic creation once more begin their life's work by learning a trade, then the unproductive 'artist' will no longer be condemned to deficient artistry, for their skill will now be preserved for the crafts, in which they will be able to achieve excellence.¹³

This passage from the manifesto, demonstrates that Gropius conceived of the Bauhaus as a collective enterprise that would work together as a new kind of 'guild of craftsmen' that was modelled on the form of community in a 'Bauhütte' – the medieval lodges where artists, artisans and builders came together to build cathedrals. Even Gropius' name for the new 'guild' – 'Bauhaus' – recalled the word 'Bauhütte'. However as Gropius reflected in 1969, he wanted to provide a name that was more metaphorical and forward-looking.¹⁴ For Gropius, the German word 'bauen' had much wider meanings than just creating buildings; it also meant to build character, skills and above all a community. This idea of the institution as an organic body that could unify all of the arts was influenced by the Marxist conception of society as an organism with all parts interrelated and co-dependent. The quote also demonstrates the influence of William Morris' own distinct philosophy of the relationship between art and socialism on Gropius' thinking. In

¹² For more on Otto Bartning's specific and the Arbeitsrat's general influence on the first Bauhaus programme see: Marcel Franciscano, *Walter Gropius and the Creation of the Bauhaus in Weimar*, University of Illinois Press, Champaign-Urbana, 1971. pp. 127-152

¹³ Walter Gropius, Programme of the Staatliche Bauhaus in Weimar, Weimar, April 1919, as quoted in *Bauhaus: Art as Life*, Koenig Books, London, 2012, Catalogue of an exhibition held at Barbican Art Gallery, London, 3 May - 12 August 2012. p. 15

¹⁴ 'I arrived at the name instinctively, I did not want to use the term Bauhutte which had exclusively medieval connotations. I wanted something more far reaching. The German word bauen has a wide-ranging meaning: among other things, on *builds* character.' Walter Gropius, Letter to Wulf Herzogenrath, Cambridge, Mass., 30 October 1968; in Reginald Isaacs, *Walter Gropius*, Gebr. Mann Verlag, Berlin, 1983, vol.1 p. 460, Quoted in Éva Forgács, *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 1995, p. 5

particular, it rearticulates Morris' ideas of 'joy in labour' and 'useful work versus useless toil'.

Like Morris, Gropius sought equality between all artistic disciplines and, through the Bauhaus he aimed to break down the hierarchies between artistic disciplines and in particular between art and craft. His principle stated aim, which he declared in the manifesto, was to 'create a new guild of craftsman without the class distinctions that raise an arrogant barrier between craftsman and artist!'¹⁵ He further maintained that the difference between arts and crafts were hegemonic and illusory, based solely on bourgeois values that aimed to create artificial distinctions by conceptualising the artist as an intellectual and the artisan as a purely manual worker:

There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman. In rare moments of inspiration, transcending the consciousness of his will, the grace of heaven may cause his work to blossom into art. But proficiency in craft is essential to every artist. Therein lies the prime source of creative imagination.¹⁶

Instead, Gropius, like Morris before him, recognised that the process of making is also a process of thinking and that the value of craftsmanship was as a harmonious meeting ground between the work of the mind and of the hand that provided a unique kind of joyful labour. The Bauhaus consequently, would combine traditional craft-based workshops in metal, weaving, woodwork, stained glass and ceramics taught by local artisans with studio classes taught by professional artists that would invite students to consider the formal and structural properties of the materials they were using, the basics of colour and composition and geometric principles, that they could put into practice in the workshops. Furthermore, Gropius decided to put into practice Otto Bartning's idea of reintroducing the Guild system of apprentices, journeymen and masters, in order to reinforce the importance of mastering craft skills and undercut what was deemed by the Arbeitsrat to be a bourgeois relationship between professor and student in the academies. This structure was designed to ensure that students would learn to integrate craft skills and artistic principles through the intellectual and physical process of making and develop problem-solving techniques that would result in new functionally and aesthetically useful products befitting of a new socialist society.

As Weingarden notes, the first products of the Bauhaus workshops emphasised the attempt to purge art of 'its bourgeois values' by focusing on handicraft and returning to the craft techniques of regional folk art.¹⁷ However, from around 1921, Gropius began to introduce more mechanical equipment into the workshops. This was in part a practical development, in that the Bauhaus did not have the financial backing to purchase all of the latest technology when it first opened and in part a reaction to criticism that the look of handicrafts was too individualistic and backwards looking and that the uniqueness of each object would give it the status of a luxury and thus exclusive, rather than, useful product. However, it was also due

¹⁵ Walter Gropius, Programme of the Staatliche Bauhaus in Weimar, Weimar, April 1919, as quoted in *Bauhaus: Art as Life*, Koenig Books, London, 2012, Catalogue of an exhibition held at Barbican Art Gallery, London, 3 May - 12 August 2012, p. 15

¹⁶ Walter Gropius, Programme of the Staatliche Bauhaus in Weimar, Weimar, April 1919, as quoted in *Bauhaus: Art as Life*, Koenig Books, London, 2012, Catalogue of an exhibition held at Barbican Art Gallery, London, 3 May - 12 August 2012, p. 15

¹⁷ Lauren S Weingarden, *Aesthetics Politicized: William Morris to the Bauhaus*, *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 38, No. 3, Spring, 1985, p. 11

to the recognition by Gropius that in order to create a truly proletarian art, artists would have to work within the means of production of their own time. Rather than attempting to boycott or overthrow industrial production, which would inevitably be a fruitless endeavour, Gropius recognised that its essential value over handicraft was that it could be used as a vehicle for collective reception and was therefore useful in terms of instating a new kind of aesthetic value system in wider society. Furthermore, the advantage of standardisation in production was that it provided a mechanism for equality between products and thus the possibility of equal distribution of these products in a socialist society. Gropius was particularly interested in developing standardised housing for these reasons.

However, even as this approach was later bolstered by Gropius' reframing of the Bauhaus around a 'new unity between art and technology', this did not mean that he had abandoned craft values. On the contrary, the first two years of the Bauhaus acted as a launching pad and provided both the faculty and the students with the ideas and skills necessary for his further aim of humanising and socialising industrial production through the embedding of craftsmanship and craft values in the design process. This did not represent a rupture in Gropius' thinking but rather a continuation of his thinking around a problem that had preoccupied the Deutsche Werkbund in the years preceding the war: how to invest human qualities into industrial processes so that they would not alienate either the maker or the user.

The Deutsche Werkbund had strived most importantly for an insistence on 'quality' in industrial production. This idea of 'quality' meant 'not only excellent durable work and the use of flawless, genuine materials, but also the attainment of an organic whole rendered *sachlich*, noble and, if you will, artistic by such means.'¹⁸ Put simply, the idea that there was a need to retain 'the human' in mechanised production processes. In 1907, when Peter Behrens helped establish the Werkbund, in cooperation with Hermann Muthesius and Henry Van de Velde amongst others, Walter Gropius was working in his offices. He was greatly influenced by the core philosophy of the Werkbund, which fostered in him the idea that it was only through the collaboration of artists of the highest calibre that the aesthetic quality of industrially mass produced objects could be attained.¹⁹ During World War I, Gropius refined his thinking around the relationship between art and thinking thus:

Only the most brilliant ideas are good enough for multiplication by industry and worthy of benefitting not just the individual but the public as a whole.²⁰

This perspective is particularly interesting in terms of the exhibition as it turns the idea that the value of art as its uniqueness or its 'aura' on its head to suggest that the best quality art is actually that which should and could be reproduced through mass production for collective rather than individual reception. At this stage Gropius was not arguing that standardisation was the way forward, rather that the highest quality design objects are only possible through the involvement of the

¹⁸ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, Penguin Books, Hamondsworth, 1974, p.35, quoted in Éva Forgács, *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 1995, p. 6

¹⁹ For more on this see: Éva Forgács, *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 1995, pp. 5-13

²⁰ Walter Gropius, *Die Entwicklung Moderner Industriebaukunst*, quoted in Éva Forgács, *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 1995, p. 7

highest quality artists and designers in their design, and that it is the highest quality designs that should be selected for reproduction.

The Werkbund, however, became a site of conflict that was unable to resolve the dichotomy between standardised design and artistic creativity and freedom. Muthesius argued that it is: 'only by standardisation... as a salutary concentration of forces can a generally acceptable and reliable taste be introduced'.²¹ In other words, standardisation would effectively raise the taste of the masses through its collective reception and the reinforcement of a collective standardised aesthetic value system. However, Henry Van de Velde, argued that artists and designers would naturally resist standardisation as it imposed limits on their creativity, which was, instead the very factor that would raise standards in design. The aim of the Werkbund was to find a new equality between art and technology, humanity and industry, so that the machine would 'become a serving member of our community' and as Theodor Fischer forewarned would not become 'the ruler of our age'.²²

As, the Werkbund was not able to achieve this core aim, Gropius saw his central aim for the Bauhaus as being to reignite these ideas and to try once more to find a way to consolidate the artistic creativity needed for the design of the highest quality objects and the new technological processes of industrial production which would allow these objects to be received by a collective audience. When he was invited by Henry Van de Velde to take over the Weimar Grand Ducal School of Art, he recognised this as an opportunity to put his beliefs into practice in the re-founding of a new pedagogical institution. When Gropius sent a memorandum from the battlefield to the Ministry entitled 'Proposals for an establishment of an Institute Offering Artistic Direction to Industry, Applied Art and Crafts' he outlined his aims for the Bauhaus: 'The old-fashioned craftsman combined in his person the technician, the merchant and the artists. If we omit the artist from this triad, then the machine-made product will be nothing but an inferior substitute of the handcrafted item. But commercial circles are well aware of the surplus value contributed to industry by the artists' spiritual labour'.²³ He further argued that industrially produced products, such as cooking utensils or lamps, could be more important art forms as carriers of the cultural and political values of the nation, than paintings or sculptures, in that they could be collectively rather than individually received and useful to the whole community rather than serving as individual property or status symbols.

Gropius approach to disalienating industrial production processes was to develop a new generation of industrial designers, through his pedagogical programme at the Bauhaus, that would use the values, principles and techniques of craft and artistic production to ensure that the objects of industrial production were invested with human qualities and were thus of the highest quality even when they were standardised. The curriculum at the Bauhaus was thus developed to ensure that the students developed the essential artistic principles during the preliminary course through experimentation with colour, material properties, composition and

²¹ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, Penguin Books, Hamondsworth, 1974, p.30, quoted in Éva Forgács, *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 1995, p. 7

²² Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, Penguin Books, Hamondsworth, 1974, p.29, quoted in Éva Forgács, *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 1995, p.8

²³ Walter Gropius, *Vorschläge zur Gründung einer Lehranstalt als Künstlerische Beratungsstelle für Industrie, Gewerbe und Handwerk*, January 1916, Weimar State Archive, quoted in Éva Forgács, *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 1995, p. 10

structure and learnt and refined technical craft skills and the processes of production in the workshops. This education would ensure that when these students progressed to the design or production of either prototypes for industrial production or architecture, that their work would be grounded in humanistic craft and artistic values and a firsthand knowledge of the production processes themselves, ensuring that they would not be alienated from the production of the work and that their work would also be of the highest quality. Lauren S Weingarden demonstrates how this approach was thus designed to offset some of the negative affects of the division of labour under industrial production, even if this division was not overcome:

Gropius acknowledged the inevitability of this division of labour between designer and maker under industrial conditions, but he argued that the gap between the artist-designer and the machine operator could at least be compensated for by comprehending how human behaviour and consciousness permeates every phase leading up to the finished Bauhaus prototype.²⁴

It cannot, therefore be argued that the machine-operator, in this process, would be relieved of any of the monotony of his or her work, in the manner that William Morris strove for, but also never achieved. However, in his text, *Principles of Bauhaus Production*, Gropius argued that the creative approach of the artist-designer in the development of their prototypes would humanise the process of industrial production 'by freeing the machine from its lack of creative spirit' and would therefore produce better and less alienating products as a result.²⁵ Gropius therefore was not really concerned with disalienating the industrial production processes for the people that facilitated these processes, but rather he was concerned with disalienating the process of designing for industrial production and also the processes of using the products produced by these methods. This latter aim was to be achieved by making the processes of production, design and craftsmanship legible in the final form of the product, through its structure, its finish and the way in which its form follows the function of the object. All of these factors are legible in the final form of the object, and evidence of the artist-designer's rational, intellectual and intrinsically human thought processes and of the skill and craftsmanship executed through the relationship between mind and hand.²⁶

Furthermore, Gropius saw industrial processes as a way to achieve a form of collective reception of art, or collective vision, that would enable people to overcome the fragmentation and alienation of everyday life in the industrial age. By limiting the choice of the student artist-designer to basic geometric forms and primary colours, Gropius aimed to create a new collective art that was accessible to everyone. By creating limitless artworks as standardised forms, through industrial production, this would further democratise art and make it affordable to the

²⁴ Lauren S. Weingarden, *Aesthetics Politicized: William Morris to the Bauhaus*, *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 38, No. 3, Spring, 1985, p. 12

²⁵ Walter Gropius, *Principles of Bauhaus Production*, March 1926 quoted in Hans Wingler (ed.) *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau*, Berlin, Chicago MIT Press (Cambridge) 196 P. 110.

²⁶ For more on this and the continuity between William Morris' politics and Walter Gropius thought in relation to art and design see: Lauren S Weingarden, *Aesthetics Politicized: William Morris to the Bauhaus*, *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 38, No. 3, Spring, 1985, pp. 8-13

masses, whilst providing a common and collective visual language that would unite all people in all places and all times, transcending geographical and class boundaries. These aims were therefore undoubtedly rooted in left-wing political values and the same overriding goal that underpinned his work with the Arbeitsrat für Kunst – to democratise, equalize and collectivise the production, reception and distribution of art so that it was ideologically consistent with an ideal socialist society.

As previously noted, the fact that Gropius himself banned overt political activity and prevented his students and staff from joining political parties seems to contradict my claims here that Gropius was instilling a socialist value system into the Bauhaus as an institution. However, it must be remembered that for that Gropius to achieve his aims, it was essential for the Bauhaus to exist. Gropius saw his political role in the new Germany as the creation of a proletarian art based on socialist values rather than direct political activism. He did not have a defined party political standpoint, although we can say he was ideologically left as opposed to right-wing, and as his Arbeitsrat nickname 'Maas' indicated, he had a measured or pragmatic approach to decision-making, although his leftist values particularly those of collectivism and equality defined his overriding aims. He therefore, above all else, needed the Bauhaus to survive, and when the conservative Weimar citizens began to actively complain about the Bauhaus as a Bolshevik institution, Gropius perceptively foresaw the threat that overt political activity would bring and thus simply acted accordingly to try and prevent the school's closure. It could further be argued that Gropius continued to disavow his political aspirations through out his life, however it should be noted that Gropius was at times in both National Socialist, Germany and later in Macarthyist America, in real danger if he were thought of as a Communist. Gropius also wanted to make a distinction between his desire for the development of a new more democratic, more equal and more collective art and the use of art as political activism or propaganda for specific political parties – a strategy that had been demonstrated to be so dangerous in Nazi Germany.

The core *Bauhaus Idea* can therefore be defined as a triadic structure that would unite technical and artistic skills with industrial production without alienating the worker or the user. The core values that underpinned the idea were left-wing, although not specifically Marxist or tied to any particular party or movement, and had much in common with those of the British Arts and Crafts Movement of William Morris. The value of collectivism underpinned both the idea of the Bauhaus as a community of artisans and artists from all disciplines that would collectively produce a new art. It also affected the decision to move in the direction of industrial production as Gropius saw this as a means of creating a mode of collective reception that could help facilitate the acceptance of a new truly proletarian art, based on socialist values, made for the people by the people. The value of equality was the basis for Gropius' belief in the need to breakdown the hierarchies between arts and crafts and between all artistic disciplines and to move away from the professor student structure. He felt that all of these divisions and hierarchical relations only existed in order to maintain the needs of an elite ruling class and that in order to create a truly proletarian art these statuses needed to be equalized and purged of old bourgeois value systems if they were to contribute to the development of a classless society. It was also behind his admittance policy, which aimed to give all students whether male or female, proletariat, petit

bourgeois or bourgeois an equal chance to enrol at the Bauhaus. The Bauhaus as an institution can therefore be defined as left-wing, even if all of the people that comprised its student body and faculty cannot be, on the basis of the values extolled by the *Bauhaus idea* and the ways in which this idea was put into practice through the organisation, structure and pedagogical methodologies that Gropius developed. What we therefore need to do to communicate this in the exhibition is to select a body of works that most coherently reflects the *Bauhaus idea*.

How can we communicate the *Bauhaus Idea* through the selection and arrangement of Bauhaus works in the exhibition?

In order to demonstrate how socialist values underpin Gropius' *Bauhaus Idea* it is essential to begin the display with the Bauhaus Manifesto of 1919, which also includes Lyonel Feininger's woodcut 'Cathedral of Socialism'. As I have already outlined, this manifesto demonstrates how Gropius' idea was imbued with the values of collectivism, in that he strove to create a community of craftsmen and women and extolled architecture as a form of collective production, and also equality, in that he aimed to breakdown the hierarchies between arts and crafts and between all artistic disciplines.

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Fig. 125. Program of the State Bauhaus in Weimar, 1919, Woodcut with Letterpress on paper, Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin

Feininger's 'Cathedral of Socialism' was intended to reflect the words of Gropius in the Bauhaus manifesto: 'Together lets us conceive and create the new building of the future, which will embrace architecture, sculpture and painting in one unity and which will rise one day toward heaven from the hands of one million workers like a crystal symbol of a new faith'. The medieval cathedral representing a building where the various arts had been brought into synthesis, with architecture dominant and the two lower flanking towers in the woodcut represent painting and sculpture. The use of woodcut and gothic symbolism represented an exaltation of the craftsman and referenced Morris' call for a gothic revival. The woodcut of the crystalline cathedral together with Gropius' phrase 'crystal symbol of a new faith' underscores the influence that the Arbeitsrat in general and, in particular, fellow

Arbeitsrat member and architect Bruno Taut had on Gropius, with his designs for buildings constructed out of glass shards. Showing the original woodblock that Feininger cut for the manifesto would allow us to demonstrate the craftsmanship that went into the production of the print and show how this chimed with Gropius' exaltation of craft values and techniques.

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Fig. 126. *Arbeitsrat für Kunst, An alle Künstler! (To All Artists!)*, 1919, British Library and Fig. 127. Peter Behrens, *Deutsche Werkbund Ausstellung Poster, 1914*, V&A Collection.

It is also important to ground the display in the context of Gropius' other left-wing arts organisations, the Novembergruppe and in particular the Arbeitsrat für Kunst, in order to demonstrate that Gropius did aim to create a new socialist art, even if he was not necessarily aligned to one particular political party or ideology. I therefore propose that there is a small archival display as part of the Bauhaus section of the exhibition, which contains the Arbeitsrat and Novembergruppe pamphlets and books and which outlines the position and objectives of the groups in relation to left-wing politics. As we are also trying to demonstrate the way in which Gropius sought to reignite the debates kick-started but never fully realised by the Deutscher Werkbund, around how to unite the arts and industry without alienating the maker or the user of products, it would also be useful to include some items relating to the Werkbund that emphasised this, such as Peter Behrens' poster for the 1914 Cologne exhibition.

The majority of exhibitions of the Bauhaus, either present the institution entirely through the post-1923 manifesto works, which demonstrate a modernist and functionalist aesthetic, or present the work as if there were two distinct Bauhaus' one concerned with handiwork and craft and the other with solely industrial production.²⁷ However, although there was certainly a shift towards industrial production and a change of priorities at this time, what this approach fails to

²⁷ See, for example, *Bauhaus: Art as Life*, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 3 May - 12 August 2012, curated by Catherine Ince and Lydia Yee and *Bauhaus: Workshops for Modernity*, MoMA, New York, November 8, 2009 – January 25, 2010, curated by Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman

demonstrate is that there was also continuity in terms of how the values of craftsmanship, as advocated by William Morris, were transferred by Gropius and applied to the design and processes of industrial production – the means of production of his own time. The display of Bauhaus works in this exhibition should therefore aim to demonstrate the continuity of Gropius' idea rather than presenting it as an absolute rupture with his previous values. With this in mind it is important to present the works as a unified body of works, united around Gropius' *Bauhaus Idea*.

Therefore, I would propose presenting the works non-chronologically, so as not to emphasise a divide between handicraft and industrial production and instead focus on the common ground between these approaches and the way that craft techniques and values informed the production of Bauhaus proto-types for industrially produced objects. I also proposed to focus solely on the works produced during Gropius tenure as Bauhaus Director: from 1919 to 1928. Thus, despite the fact that Hannes Meyer, who took over from Gropius as Director, was a committed Marxist and much of the work produced after 1928 at the Bauhaus shows evidence of Communist values, I have decided not to include this work as we are focusing on Gropius' *Bauhaus Idea* and not Meyer's interpretation of this idea.

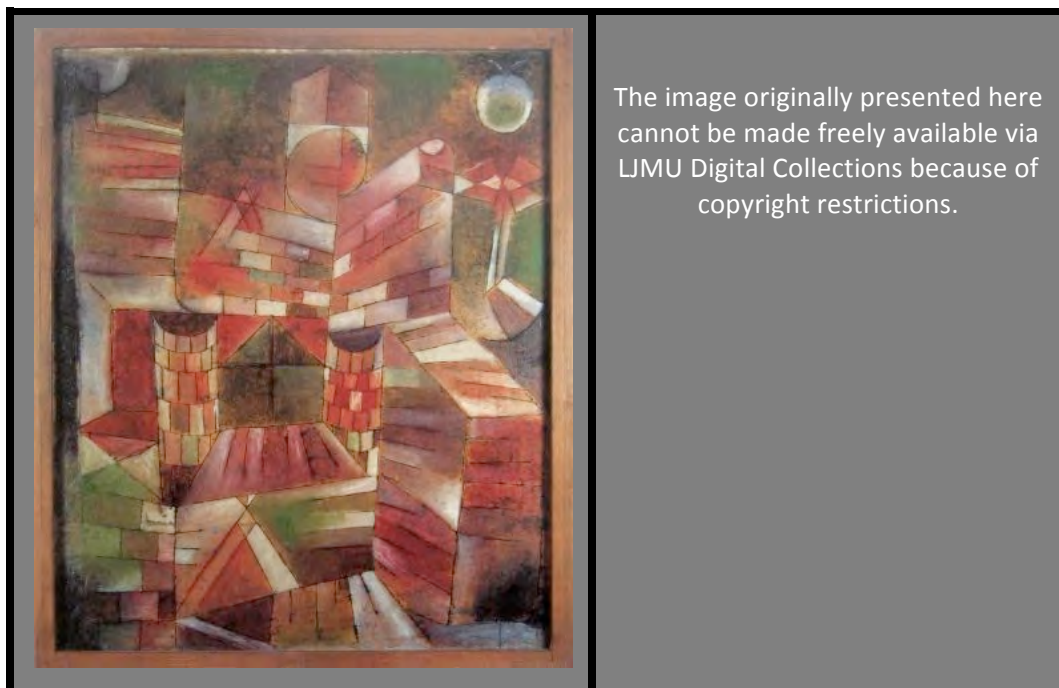


Fig. 128. Paul Klee, *Architecture with window*, 1919, Zentrum Paul Klee and Fig. 129. Gunta Stölz, *Slit Tapestry*, 1927-28, Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin.

However, as there is such a large body of works produced by the collective students and faculty of the Bauhaus, and as we only have a limited space to present a selection of these works in the exhibition, it is important to find a way to further narrow down the field whilst still presenting the institution as unified by the *Bauhaus Idea*. I therefore developed proposals for hangs, which aim to communicate the central thrust of the *Bauhaus Idea* through a small selection of works. My first approach to doing this was to concentrate on the aim of achieving equality between the arts and craft and their interrelationship at the Bauhaus, by

focussing on the way in which the Bauhaus student Marianne Brandt combined the influence of fine artist and Master of Form, László Moholy-Nagy with excellence in crafts learned at the metal workshop, to produce iconic designs for industrial production. I would also explore how Gunta Stolz similarly combined the influence of Paul Klee's art and teaching with what she learnt in the weaving workshops to create exquisite wall hangings.

My second approach was to find individual works, which exemplified the *Bauhaus Idea* in the way it embodied the values of craftsmanship and a unity between arts, crafts and, later, industrial production. I have outlined how each of the individual works I have selected fulfils these criteria below. In order to present the work as a unified vision, which highlighted the commonalities rather than differences between the works, I further proposed that we refine the selection on the basis of colour. I had noticed that there was a predominance of works that used yellow combined with grey and neutral tones as exemplified by the photograph of Gropius' office below and the Annie Alber's wall hanging. Although, this may seem a fairly arbitrary reason for narrowing down the field of works, it is actually in keeping with Gropius' aim of providing a new common and collective visual language through the repetition of geometric forms and basic colour combinations. I therefore put together a selection of works which exemplified Gropius' aim of using craft values as a basis for humanising the processes of designing, making and using industrial products, and which was further unified through the colour combinations of yellow and neutral tones. The curatorial team decided that the second approach was the most coherent and cohesive way to represent the Bauhaus as an institution, as the first approach presented too limited a scope of what was actually produced there.

After experimenting with various ways of presenting these objects we decided that it was not appropriate to show objects produced for everyday use on plinths as if they were exalted artworks. I also decided that a better strategy for presenting the objects in terms of showing the common craft basis and the continuity of Gropius' idea would be to combine those objects with a handicraft aesthetic with those with a mechanised aesthetic. I therefore proposed that these objects should be presented in a specially designed cabinet that echoed the form of Annie Alber's iconic wall hanging and Edmund Collien's 'Extension to the Prellerhaus'. Label texts for the objects could even be constructed and hung from the cabinet in the same style as in Collien's photomontage.

The other factor that effected the choice of specific works was their geographical and institutional location. It is more financially prudent in terms of shipping costs for Tate Liverpool to select works which are located either geographically closer, ideally in Britain, or from institutions or locations which we are already borrowing works from for this show. The Tate collection itself is the most ideal location, as this has the advantage of also allowing Tate to showcase more of its collection works. Tate recently acquired a series of photographs by Bauhaus students Iwao Yamawaki, Lucia Moholy and Edmund Collelin, which document life at the Bauhaus and examples of the investigations into the structural properties of materials that were produced as part of the preliminary course. These photographs are therefore an excellent way to introduce the Bauhaus as an institution and as a community, and to demonstrate how craft principles and techniques were embedded into the

students learning programme from the very beginning of their education there.

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Fig. 130. Lucia Moholy, Walter Gropius' Director's office, 1924-25 and Fig. 131. Annie Albers', Hanging, 1967, (made), 1926 (designed), V&A Collection

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. This image was sourced at: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/yamawaki-cafeteria-after-lunch-bauhaus-dessau-p79894>

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. This image was sourced at: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/collein-untitled-material-study-josef-albers-preliminary-course-bauhaus-dessau-p80045>

Fig. 132. Iwao Yamawaki, Cafeteria after lunch, Bauhaus Dessau, 1930-32 and Fig. 133. Edmund Collein, Untitled (Material Study, Josef Albers' Preliminary Course, Bauhaus Dessau), c.1927-30, Tate Collection

Architecture was, as noted, incredibly important to Gropius' vision of a unified art and the idea of the Bauhaus as new kind of craftsman's guild. Although there were several architectural schemes undertaken by the students and faculty, Sommerfeld House is the Bauhaus project that most fully realised the aims, and applied the values, outlined in Gropius' 1919 manifesto. The house was built between 1920 and 1921 for the timber merchant Adolf Sommerfeld and involved all of the workshops in the school, with the exception of pottery, in its design, build and decoration. In this respect, it was certainly the greatest collective production ever realised at the Bauhaus; putting into practice Gropius ideal of a community of artisans, artists and builders working together in cooperation and harmony to construct a unified and total work of art. The building was also replete with traditional craft techniques fused with a modernist aesthetic, from Joost Schmidt's intricate geometric carvings

to Albers' stained-glass windows, breaking down the boundaries between monumental and decorative art and the fine arts and craft. It thus exemplified the ideals of 'joyful', collective and unified labour that Gropius strove for and hoped to use as the basis for more socially useful and socialistic art. Photographs of the construction, the Bauhaus workshops involved in operation, and the details of the final building would therefore effectively communicate the *Bauhaus Idea* as expressed by Gropius in the 1919 manifesto.

The photograph originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJM Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions.

Fig. 134. Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer, Sommerfeld House, Berlin-Steglitz, Entrance hall and stair with woodcarvings by Joost Schmidt and chairs by Marcel Breuer, 1920-21, Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin

Joseph Hartwig's famous chess sets, also produced in the wood workshop, are similarly emblematic of Gropius' *Bauhaus Idea* of combining the advances in the fine art with traditional craft skill and values in order to produce the most functionally useful and aesthetically beautiful objects that were worthy of mass production for collective reception.²⁸

Hartwig sought to apply the idea of a universal artistic language based on the most basic geometric forms, as developed by Malevich and El Lissitzky, to the everyday chess set, itself considered a symbol of the socialist principle of the universal right to leisure. As Benjamin Buchloh explains, Hartwig's intention was to equalise and universalise the standard chess set by stripping it of its militaristic and hierarchical class distinctions, embodied and personified in the form of the classical figures, King, Queen, Bishop, Knight, Rook and Pawns.²⁹ Instead, Hartwig applied craft values and techniques to reinvent the pieces so that their form denoted their

²⁸ It should be noted that although the chess set is often held up as an example of socialist values, by Benjamin Buchloh amongst others, Hartwig was to become a member of the National Socialist Party when they gained power. It is therefore important to stress that this work is included as an example of Gropius' *Bauhaus idea* and not as an example of left-wing political art.

²⁹ Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, *Joseph Hartwig: Chess Sets. 1922-24*, in Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman (Ed.), *Bauhaus: Workshops for Modernity*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2009, pp. 110-113

function and each piece was constructed so that its geometric shape indicated the way it moved around the board. The chess sets, as affordable but exquisitely crafted objects, with pieces based on a readily understandable and legible design and a universal geometric language was perfectly suited to the ideal of collective reception and use that Gropius espoused. The chess set should be included in the exhibition on this basis.

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions.

Fig. 135. Josef Hartwig, Chess Set, 1924, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

Theodor Bogler's combination teapots also succinctly embody Gropius' ideal of using craft values and techniques as the basis for the development of industrially reproducible objects for mass consumption. The ceramics workshop represented most closely the ideal of a collective guild of craftsmen. Geographically isolated from the rest of the Bauhaus, the accommodation and workshop were based in a former stables, but the primitive conditions – growing their own food and chopping their own wood for the kilns – engendered a real communitarian spirit amongst the students based there. Bogler enjoyed this communal spirit and often worked in collaboration with other departments, with the sculpture department providing the plaster casts and the textile department making the handles for his teapots.³⁰

As one of the very first ceramics students to qualify at the Bauhaus as a journeyman, he was soon recruited by Gropius to help push the ceramics workshop towards the production of works suitable for mass production. Bogler experimented with designs for modular teapots and developed a kind of serial production line for these in the ceramic workshop, with help of students from other departments.³¹ Bogler did not manage to get these teapots licensed for industrial production, but they were produced by the workshop in multiple and should be

³⁰ Juliet Kinchin, *Theodor Bogler: Teapots*. 1923, in Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman (Ed.), *Bauhaus: Workshops for Modernity*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2009, p. 112

³¹ Juliet Kinchin, *Theodor Bogler: Teapots*. 1923, in Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman (Ed.), *Bauhaus: Workshops for Modernity*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2009, p. 110

considered an experiment in the development of industrial ceramics rather than a failure. The designs for these teapots embody the combination of rational and functionalist thinking with a deep understanding of the material properties and surfaces of the clay itself that embeds a sense of the humanity of the maker in the objects themselves. Bogler himself saw no inherent contradiction between the 'handwerk' and mass production techniques and was happy to consider himself an artisan who produced industrial designs. In this way he fulfilled Gropius' vision of the disalienated industrial designer. Therefore, although Bogler himself, later became linked to the radical catholic right, his work should still be included in the exhibition on the basis of its relevance to the *Bauhaus Idea*.³² These teapots can helpfully be juxtaposed with Marianne Brandt's streamlined designs for silver tea infusers to stress the similarities in their production in terms of craft values. Although, they have an industrial aesthetic, the tea infusers were entirely hand-made and like Bogler's were never mass-produced. However, for Brandt they were important steps in the development of her craft towards the design of products for mass production. Most importantly they show evidence of her interest in the functionalism of the object, including a successful non-drip spout, and a heat-resistant ebony handle. These skills would eventually lead Brandt to the creation of some of the Bauhaus' most successful ever mass-produced products; her archetypal desk lamps designed in collaboration with Hin Bredendiek, were still being produced into the fifties and were a huge commercial success.

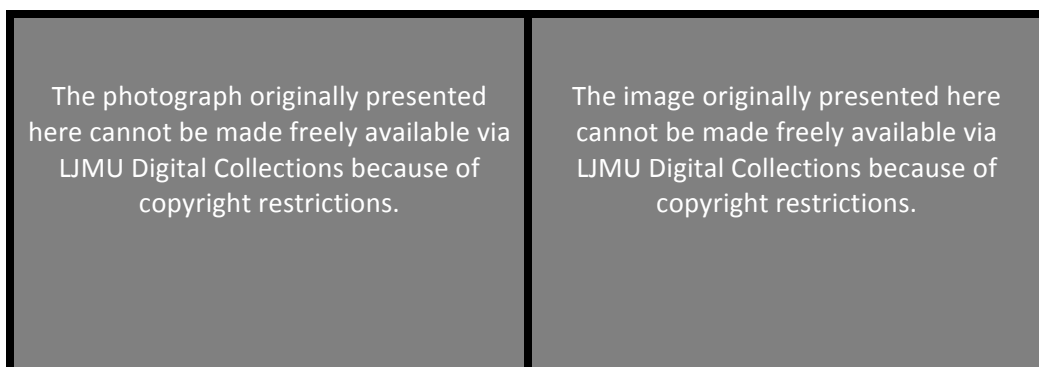


Fig. 136. Theodor Bogler, *Combination teapot with cane handle*, 1923, *Klassik Stiftung Weimar* and Fig. 137. Marianne Brandt, *Silver Tea Infuser*, 1924, *British Museum*

Similarly, Wilhelm Wagenfeld and Carl Jakob Jucker's table lamp of 1923-24 is important to include in the exhibition, in that it represented the initial struggle to combine crafts techniques and values with geometrical functionalism for industrial production. An attempt Wagenfeld was to dismiss later as 'a crippled bloodless picture in glass and metal' for its failure to function as an economical prototype for mass production.³³ However, this lamp is still held up by Frederic J. Schwarz as an exemplar of the idea of a 'socialism of vision' espoused by both Gropius and the constructivist circles of László Moholy-Nagy – the idea that elementary forms, primary colours and the principles of light and dark could be equally understood by all people, in all places in all times.³⁴ The time and the skill needed to craft the perfect forms of the lamp, meant that it could never achieve the 'socialism of vision'

³² For more on Bogler's Teapots see: Juliet Kinchin, *Theodor Bogler: Teapots*. 1923, in Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman (Ed.), *Bauhaus: Workshops for Modernity*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2009, pp. 110-113

³³ Wilhelm Wagenfeld, quoted in Gillian Naylor, *The Bauhaus Reassessed: Sources and Design Theory*, E.P. Dutton, New York, 1985, p.112

³⁴ Frederic J. Schwarz, *Wilhelm Wagenfeld and Carl Jakob Jucker: Table Lamp*. 1923-24, in Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman (Ed.), *Bauhaus: Workshops for Modernity*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2009, pp. 138-141

that they aspired to, but it should be included as it still functions as an elegant symbol of the initial attempt to combine craft values with modes of industrial production and above all the expressed the desire to achieve collective reception. Again, the juxtaposition with Marianne Brandt and Hin Bredendiek's, Desk Lamp, which was successfully mass produced will demonstrate the continuity of the craft principles and the development of craft techniques for industrial production.

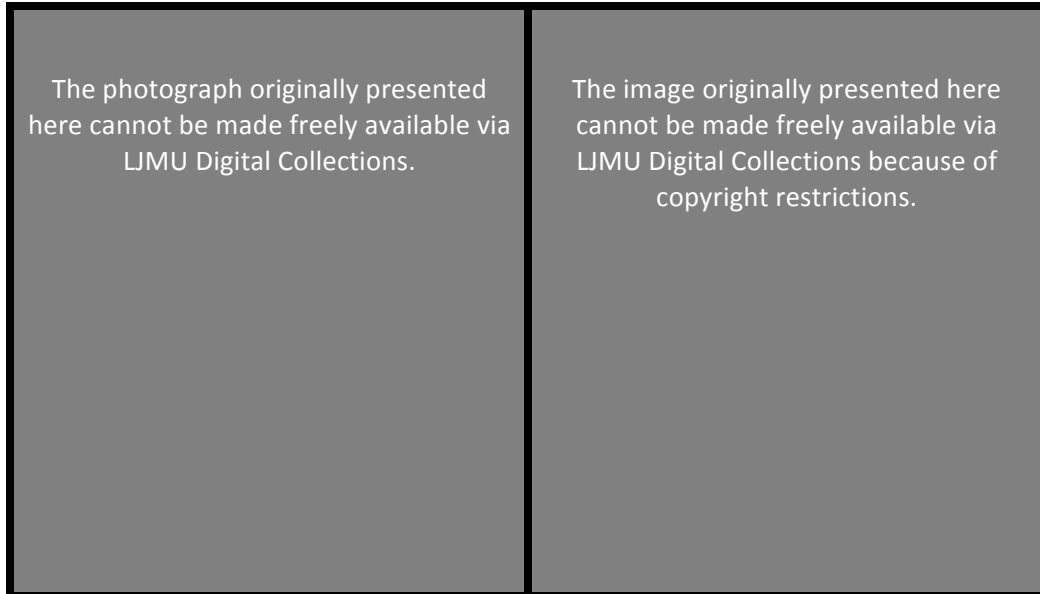


Fig. 138. Wilhelm Wagenfeld and Carl Jakob Jucker, Table Lamp, 1923-24, V&A Collection and Fig. 139. Marianne Brandt and Hin Bredendiek, Desk Lamp, 1928, Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin

Gunta Stölzl's wall hangings, on the other hand, are often shown as examples of handiwork and the original expressionist craft ethos of the Bauhaus, as distinguished from the later modernist designs for industrial production. However, Stölzl's work is actually a particularly good example of how artistic form and craft values were fused in a completely new way in order to meet Gropius ideal of making objects for mass production and thus collective reception. Although Stölzl was at first unenthusiastic about the introduction of modern Jacquard looms in to the weaving workshop as she felt the handlooms taught her students the properties and capacities of the materials and medium that they were working with, she later became committed to investigating the potential of the new looms to 'influence the public at large in every sphere'.³⁵ She began to see the Jacquard punch card – a forerunner to the modern computer program – as a means of developing a new aesthetic that would make legible the means by which an object was produced, thus disalienating both the designer and the user from the process of making the object through industrial production in the way that Gropius advocated. As T'ai Smith describes her designs were, 'strikingly self-reflexive about the work and its medium, at once mirroring the particular process of production on a Jacquard loom and also its status as an object.'³⁶ Stölzl recognised the correspondence between the geometric forms that the format of the grid-based Jacquard punch card necessarily orientated the maker towards and the principles of harmonious multi-sensory composition taught by Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky at the Bauhaus and

³⁵ Gunta Stölzl quoted in T'ai Smith, *Gunta Stölzl: 5 Choirs, 1928* in Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman (Ed.), *Bauhaus: Workshops for Modernity*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2009, p. 208

³⁶ T'ai Smith, *Gunta Stölzl: 5 Choirs, 1928* in Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman (Ed.), *Bauhaus: Workshops for Modernity*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2009, pp. 206-209

similarly based on elementary geometry. She thus combined artistic formal analysis with an understanding of the technique and media of production, underpinned by craft values, in order to create not only harmonious designs but also an ideal form of harmonious disalienated labour where the designer would be able to utilise all of their faculties.

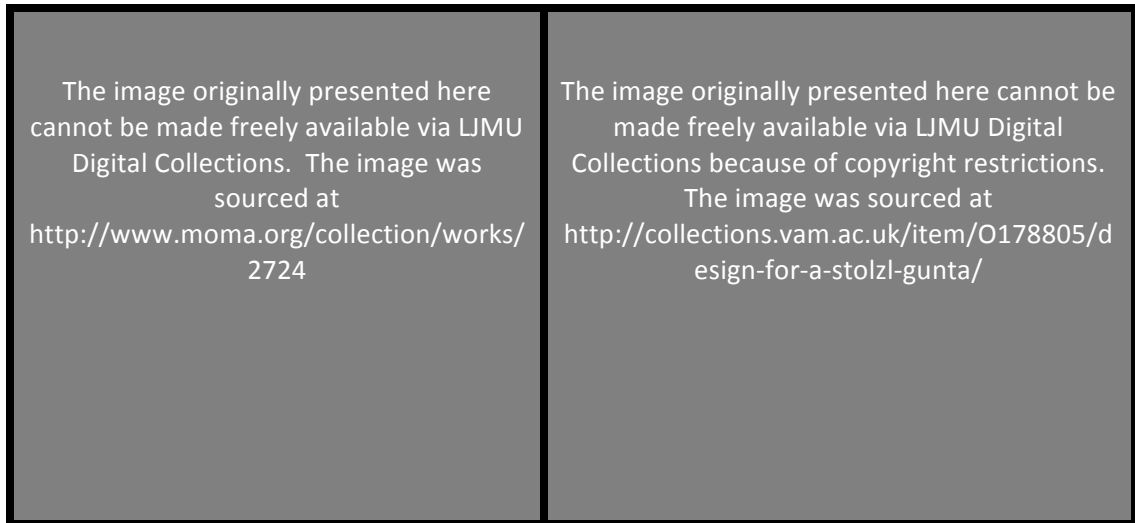


Fig. 140. Josef Albers, *Kombinations-Schrift (Combinatory Letters)*, Glass lettering elements, 1928, MoMA, New York and Fig. 141. Gunta Stölzl, *Design for a Jacquard woven wall hanging*, 1927, Victoria & Albert Museum, London

The Bauhaus is also known for its innovations in the field of graphic design and typography, as part of its drive to develop forms more suitable for industrial production, and it is therefore important to include an example of this in the exhibition. In 1920s Germany the standard in commercial printing was the Fraktur range of typefaces, derived from medieval scripts. However, at the Bauhaus, both Herbert Bayer and Josef Albers were concerned with developing a new style of universal sans serif lettering more suitable to modern life and industrial design processes. Bayer's 'universal' alphabet was thus developed on the basis of the Bauhaus principles of economy of form and material, taking the smallest geometric vocabulary of curves and lines to construct his alphabet.³⁷ Albers went further than Bayer, to produce, not only a more rigorously constructed alphabet out of the smallest possible number of geometric components, but also the mechanism for their reproduction. Albers developed glass stencils of his geometric forms that could be used by the printing workshop to accurately reproduce the letters without the need for hand rendering. Albers' *Kombinations-Schrift (Combinatory Letters)* should therefore be included in the exhibition on the basis that they embody the *Bauhaus Idea* of utilising craft-techniques to create more aesthetically balanced, useful and accessible forms for industrial production and collective reception.

László Moholy-Nagy's famous 'telephone paintings' were also suggested by the curatorial team as ideal objects to include in the display as they embody the central concept of the exhibition in that Moholy-Nagy changed the way he produced his work in response to his political beliefs and his desire to create a more democratic and collective art. Moholy-Nagy outlined the method by which he produced his five 'enamel' or 'telephone' paintings as such:

³⁷ Ellen Upton, *Herbert Bayer: Designs for 'Universal' Lettering. 1925 and 1927*, in Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman (Ed.), *Bauhaus: Workshops for Modernity*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2009, pp. 200-203

In 1922 I ordered by telephone from a sign factory five paintings in porcelain enamel. I had the factory's colour chart before me and I sketched my paintings on graph paper. At the other end of the telephone, the factory supervisor had the same kind of paper divided in to squares. He took down the dictated shapes in the correct position. (It was like playing chess by correspondence).³⁸

As the working process involved their production in an actual factory, through industrial processes, these paintings are often held up as examples of how Moholy extolled the Bauhaus mission of creating a new unity between art and technology and have indeed often been included in exhibitions about the Bauhaus on this basis.³⁹ However, there are several reasons why I would argue that they should not be included in the display of works for this exhibition, which aims to demonstrate how Gropius sought to bring craft values into the industrial production process in order to combat alienation in both the making and the using of the product. Firstly, these works are generally considered to have been produced in 1922 – as claimed by Moholy himself in the quote above – *before* Gropius had appointed him to his position at the Bauhaus. They therefore cannot be held up as examples of works that are representative of the *Bauhaus idea*.⁴⁰ Furthermore, it is a matter of conjecture whether Moholy actually produced the works in the manner he described above. In his essay of February 1924, *Emaile im Februar 1924*, which discussed the works, Moholy did not claim to have actually ordered the works by telephone in the manner he later asserted, only that it is possible that he could have:

One can have works of this sort manufactured on demand on the basis of the Ostwald colour charts and a scaled grid. One can therefore even order them by telephone.⁴¹

Furthermore, Lucia Moholy, who was married to Moholy when he made the enamel paintings, dismissed the story in her 1972 book *Margin Notes: Documentary Absurdities*, insisting that he actually went down to the sign shop and placed an order, and it was the ease of this process that led him to conclude that he could have 'done it over the telephone'.⁴² As Louis Kaplan concludes: 'this is a telephone prank, minus the telephone, and Moholy is a tele-phonie'.⁴³

However, most importantly, in spite of the fact that they involve mechanised production techniques these works actually embody almost opposite values and objectives to Gropius' central aim of humanising and disalienating industrial production by incorporating the techniques of craft into the process. Whereas, Gropius developed his pedagogical programme at the Bauhaus to ensure that the next generation of industrial designers were not separated or alienated from the production processes and that industrial processes would be improved by art and

³⁸ László Moholy-Nagy, *Abstract of an Artist*, 1944, in *The New Vision and Abstract of an Artists*, New York, Witterborn, 1947, p. 79

³⁹ For example, in *Bauhaus 1919-1933* at MoMA, New York, November 8, 2009 – January 25, 2010, curated by Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman

⁴⁰ The MoMA collection database lists these works as being produced in 1923, however their provenance information lists them as being held in the artists collection from 1922 onwards.

http://www.moma.org/collection/provenance/provenance_object.php?object_id=78747 accessed 09.09.2012

⁴¹ László Moholy-Nagy, *Emaile im Februar 1924*, in *Der Sturm 15*, Monatsbreicht, February, 1924

⁴² Lucia Moholy, *Marginal Notes*, London and Krefeld, Scherpe Verlag, 1972, p. 76

⁴³ Louis Kaplan, *The Telephone Paintings: Hanging up Moholy*, Leonardo, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1993, p. 167

craft; Moholy used industrial production process to ensure he *was* entirely alienated from the processes of production of his own artworks and that these artworks were improved by industrial processes. Moholy's aim was to develop an objective process of producing paintings, developed according to 'objective standards' that would render the idea of an artist as 'individual genius' completely redundant and democratise the means of production so that anyone could simply phone in an artwork to a factory. Rather than claiming his action in directing the process of producing the artworks, as *the* authorship of the artworks in the manner of Duchamp or conceptual artists, Moholy insisted this was a form of collective authorship and collective production involving the designer of the Ostwald colour charts, the graph paper, the factory foreman, who apparently received the order and the machine operators who actually produced it. This sentiment is reinforced by Moholy's decision not to sign his paintings and even the process of naming them was deprived of the motions of individual authorship, instead conceived as a kind of barcode, which contained only that information necessary to identify it:

I was not afraid of losing the "personal touch" so highly valued in previous painting. On the contrary I even gave up signing my paintings. I put numbers and letters with the necessary data on the back of the canvas, as if they were cars, airplanes, or other industrial products.⁴⁴

This work would therefore fit much more strategically and coherently into the section of the exhibition about collective production than as part of this display about the *Bauhaus idea*, which aims to demonstrate Gropius' approach to disalienating industrial production.

However, as Moholy-Nagy's work and philosophy was in general very consistent with Gropius' *Bauhaus Idea*, it is very important to include some examples of his work in the exhibition. Although, there is one Moholy-Nagy painting in the Tate Collection, which has sometimes been included in Bauhaus exhibitions, this painting was actually also produced in 1922 before he began teaching at the Bauhaus and cannot therefore be presented as representative of the *Bauhaus idea*. However, the painting *ZII* in MoMA's collection, from which we are already borrowing works, *was* produced during Moholy's tenure at the Bauhaus, *is* composed of the yellow and neutral shades which will enable to present a unified group of work, and *is* particularly representative of the *Bauhaus Idea*. In this work, Moholy-Nagy, influenced by the explorations into light and lamps in the metal workshops, explored the idea of painting with light rather than pigments and thus explored the medium of painting through craft techniques and values.

⁴⁴ László Moholy-Nagy, *Abstract of an Artist*, 1944, in *The New Vision and Abstract of an Artists*, New York, Witterborn, 1947, p. 79

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Fig. 142. László Moholy-Nagy, *Konstruktion in Emaille 2 (Construction in Enamel 2)*, Enamel on Steel, 1922 and Fig. 143. *ZII*, Oil on Canvas, 1925, MoMA, New York

Moholy-Nagy produced two important and influential essays, which outlined how he thought art would best serve a socialist society, 'Constructivism and the Proletariat' and 'Production Reproduction'. In these essays he asserts that the artists' role is to improve peoples' capacities for perception in order to overcome the alienation caused by an inability to fully perceive and thus fully experience life in the modern technological world. He argues that in order to improve and expand peoples' cognitive and perceptive capacities the artist must produce new aesthetic relationships and new forms, and expand what the boundaries of what is perceivable, rather than simply reproducing or depicting those that already exist. Through repeated exposure to new aesthetic relations through art, people would thus be more able to adapt to new formal and media relationships in the wider world, which are constantly evolving due to the speed of technological change. He further argued that this would create a 'socialism of vision' or a 'socialism of the mind' that would allow people to not only understand the world for what it is, but would open their minds to the possibility of new ways of seeing and organising the world. In this way, he saw photography not as a media for reproducing reality, but for creating new forms. The photogram and the photomontage thus represented the opportunity to experiment with the material, processes and formal properties of photography as a medium 'within the larger project of sensory and cognitive reform'. Whereas, the photomontages acted as a type of production rather than reproduction, which created new productive relationships between people, objects and environments that reconfigured the existing social order, the photograms had no material links to the existing order whatsoever. Moholy used deliberately unidentifiable and abstracted media, different intensities of light and techniques of refraction and reflection, in new ways to create completely immaterial

compositions through which he created new aesthetic relationships not seen before.⁴⁵

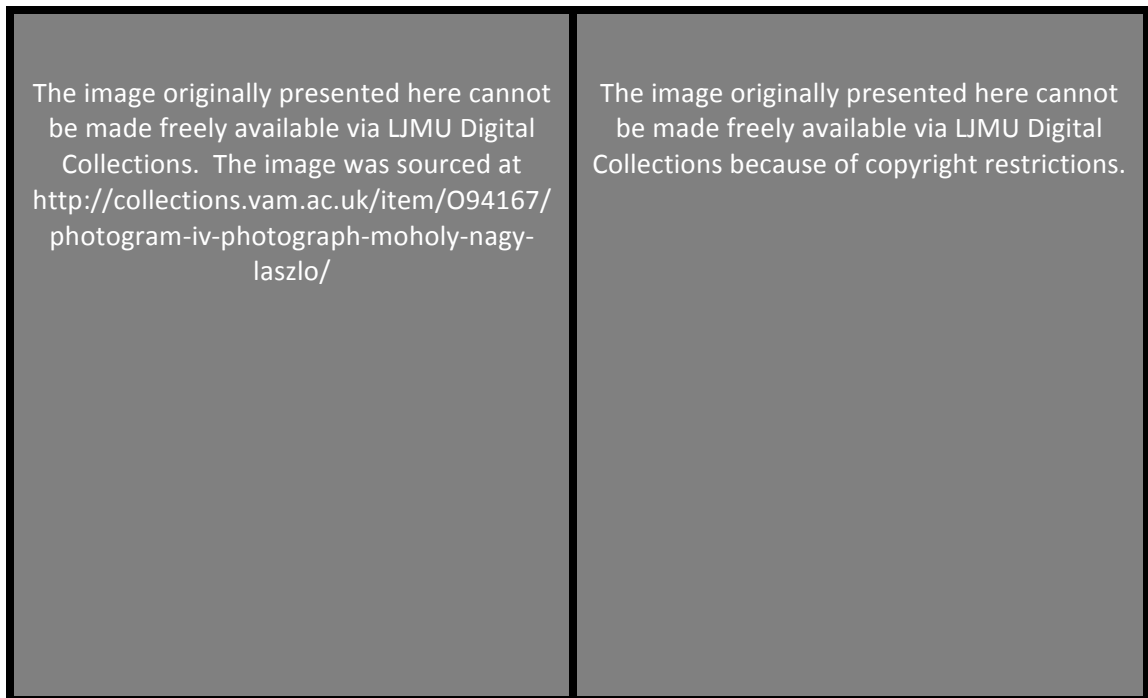


Fig. 144. László Moholy-Nagy, *Photogram IV*, 1922, Victoria and Albert Museum, London and Fig. 145. Marianne Brandt, *Me (Metal Workshop) sheet* from the portfolio '9 Jahre bauhaus. eine chronik', 1928, Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin.

These experiments with photography are linked to Gropius *Bauhaus Idea* in that they seek to disalienate the processes of production of an essentially technological and mechanised medium for the maker, by treating it as a craft, where the exploration of material properties and experimentation with technique are creative and analytical acts. The final form of both photomontage and photogram, which make their acts of construction visible, is also in sync with Gropius' ethos of making legible the processes of production in objects in order to bring the relationship between maker and user closer together. Furthermore, the idea of expanding the public appreciation of visual forms and people's ability to perceive, through the collective reception of new forms is compatible with Gropius' aim of using industrial production as means of creating the conditions for a new collective visual language. By situating this experimental work alongside his painting *ZII* and both the photomontages, hand-crafted teapots and the industrial lamps of Marianne Brandt it will not only emphasise the shared influence they had on each others work but will also emphasise that the commonality lies in their grounding in craft values and techniques.

By presenting this varied but refined collection of objects together, and in particular juxtaposing objects traditionally demarcated as craft, fine art and industrial objects, it will stress that their inclusion is based on their shared relationship to craft values and Gropius' core *Bauhaus Idea* of disalienating the design and use of industrially produced objects. Within the exhibition this selection of works will be displayed in a section that focuses on attempts within the visual arts to combat alienation caused

⁴⁵ Michael W. Jennings, *László Moholy-Nagy: Photograms*, in Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman (Ed.), *Bauhaus: Workshops for Modernity*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2009, pp. 216-219

by industrial production. As this section also includes work by William Morris, it will help to illuminate how Gropius was influence by the Morris' application of socialist ideas to artistic production.

Appendix 1c

Interactivity: Towards a 'Scientific' Collective Technique

This case study will examine how the organising principle I call 'Epic Agonism' could be used to create a single room in the exhibition dedicated to the influence that scientific methods of visualisation and spatial delineation has had on the organisation and production of art in leftist collective art practice. This room would focus specifically on how different leftist positions on collectivity, stemming from distinct political ideologies, have influenced artists groups to differently develop scientific and objective methodologies in order to challenge the idea of art as self-expression and the myth of the artist as an isolated genius. The relationship between scientific methodology and collective arts practice is based on the idea that if an artistic method is defined by scientific, rational or objective principles, it can be taught, shared and therefore used collectively to communicate a consistent and collective political vision. This idea is in direct opposition to the romantic and bourgeois conception that art should be the self-expression of an individual's spiritual being and a product of their unique genius.

In accordance with my curatorial strategy of radical disjuncture, this concise section of the exhibition will bring together work from four different groups that cut across conventional art historical boundaries; the work of French Neo-Impressionists from the 1890's, that of the Spanish collective Equipo 57 from the 1950's, the work of the Slovenian collective OHO from the early 1970's and the on-going participatory art project *Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef* initiated by the Los Angeles-based, Institute for Figuring in 2005. These groups were purposefully selected, as they cannot be immediately related by time, place, media or style. Although all of their approaches to collective practice have been influenced by left-wing politics, they also cannot be related in terms of their specific political ideology, which range from Anarchist-Communism to orthodox Marxism to eco-feminism. Nor can they all simply be classified as art collectives in the sense that they all collectively authored their work. As previously explained, the idea of this approach is to force the viewer to question, and thus think actively about why these works are brought together in the first place, before visually focussing their attention on what *is* important about these works in terms of *this* particular exhibition.

As I have already noted, the important connection between these groups specifically, is that they all developed scientific, or at least quasi-scientific, rationalised methodologies in order to challenge the romantic idea of art as the self-expression of individual genius and to assert that art should instead be understood as a form of communal and socially useful research. It is this connection, and this connection alone, that I aim to communicate through the juxtaposition of the work of these artists' groups in the exhibition. In this case study I will firstly explain, for each of these groups, how their political belief in collectivism impacted on their development of a scientific methodology for the production of their art. I will then identify a body of works that could be displayed together *affectively* to

simultaneously communicate this shared aspect of their production and illuminate the similarities and differences between their methodologies and their political objectives. As the previous case-study explained in detail the rationale behind the development and application of the divisionist technique as a form of Anarcho-Communist collective practice by the Neo-Impressionists, I will only briefly outline this here before moving on to the other.

The Neo-Impressionists were influenced by Anarchist-Communists to develop a shared scientifically-derived methodology rather than pursuing individual styles or formally collectivising their production and authorship. They were influenced to do this by their shared belief in the specific collectivist principles of Anarchist-Communism. Anarchist-Communism advocated a unique type of collectivism based on the combination of anarchist and communist principles. They believed that the only way to guarantee individual freedom and happiness was to work collectively to overcome social problems and inequalities. And that equally, intellectual, creative and artistic development were the cornerstones of individual happiness, and could be best nurtured in a socially just and equitable society, where people worked co-operatively by free-association. In short they believed in collective harmony through individual autonomy and individual autonomy through collectivity. This position led them to form co-operative societies based on these Anarchist-Communist ideals of free-association and mutual aid. The scientific positivism of Anarchist-Communism inspired Paul Signac to develop Georges Seurat's pointillist technique into a collective scientific methodology he called 'divisionism' that would counter the perceived social uselessness of Impressionism and challenge the idea of the artist as an individual genius isolated from society. Signac believed that a truly Anarchist-Communist painter should not simply concern themselves with painting pictures of Anarcho-Communist subject-matter but should instead concentrate on overturning bourgeois conventions that help to maintain the status quo and thus prevent real social progress. The Neo-Impressionists imagined themselves as an active community of sensory researchers and the scientific basis of the divisionist method meant that the principles could be shared and taught and would thus allow a community of artists, united by shared political values and objectives, to produce a collective statement through the application of a uniform technique, whilst still retaining the autonomy of producing their work on an individual basis and with the freedom to portray anything they wished in whatever way, within this system of articulation.

As the Neo-Impressionist paintings I considered in the previous case-study are relatively large, and the amount of space available to hang them in will be greatly reduced under this curatorial approach, it is important to pick only the most pertinent examples of their work. In order to position the Neo-Impressionists as a collective it is also important to show work by as many different artists as possible. I therefore propose to include in this display *In the Time of Harmony*, by Paul Signac, *In the Evening Air* by Henri Edmond Cross and the *Pile Drivers* by Maximilien Luce. It is essential to include work by Paul Signac, who was the central theoretician of the movement, and Maximilien Luce as they were the two most committed Neo-Impressionists to the Anarchist-Communist cause. *In the Time of Harmony* and *In the Evening Air* have been selected as they were conceived as part of a joint project by

Signac and Cross to communicate the future Anarchist-Communist rural idyll and to apply the divisionist technique to the production of public murals which could perform an active political function and resist commodification by the art market. These two paintings were the subject of a large volume of correspondence between the two artists and these letters can therefore be displayed as contextual information alongside the paintings in order to demonstrate how they collaborated with each other and how the works related to Anarchist-Communism. I selected *The Pile Drivers* because Luce was the only artist to tie the collective ideals of Anarchist-Communism to the existing collective labour struggles of his time. As the relationship between science and politics is not necessarily self-evident in this case, it is also important to include an archival display of contextual information which demonstrates the scientific basis of the divisionist technique and provides evidence of the Neo-Impressionists commitment to Anarchist-Communism. Furthermore, the key Signac quote I have previously identified, which outlines how he believes that Anarchist-Communist values should be applied to painting, must be included as a wall text in order to clearly articulate that it is not just the subject of the paintings that is important here.¹

In this display, the work of the Neo-Impressionists will be directly juxtaposed with the Spanish collective, Equipo 57, in order to reveal the clear similarities between their scientific methodologies and to visually demonstrate how their differing political positions affected the technique they chose to adopt. Both sought to develop a strict scientific methodology by which to produce the work in order to further delimit the materialisation of individual style, emotion or impulse and to challenge the dominant art in their times. However, whereas the Neo-Impressionists were influenced by the scientific language used by Anarchist-Communists, Equipo 57 were influenced by the scientific rationality of the Soviet constructivist movement which had its ideological base grounded in Marxism as a Scientific rather than Utopian Communist theory.

Equipo 57 (Team 57) was a collective of Spanish artists, Ángel Duarte, Agustín Ibarrola, Juan Serrano and José Duarte, that formed in Paris in 1957. They were drawn together by a shared interest in the aesthetics and ideology of 1920's Constructivism and a desire to create a socially useful and progressive art form that materialized Marxist values, through the creation of an objective universal aesthetic system. They also shared a mutual disdain for the individualistic, commoditising and profit-orientated operations of the art world and the dominant modes of artistic practice at the time that tended to encourage the idea of the artist as an individual genius.² Just as the Neo-Impressionist aimed to counteract the romantic individualism and perceived social uselessness of Impressionism; Equipo 57 sought

¹ The anarchist painter is not one who will show anarchist paintings, but one who without regard for lucre, without desire for reward, will struggle... against bourgeois and official conventions... The subject is nothing, or at least is only one part of the work of art, not more important than the other elements, colour, drawing, composition ... when the eye is educated, the people will see something other than the subject in pictures. When the society we dream of exists, the worker, freed from the exploiters who brutalize him, will have time to think and to learn. He will appreciate the different qualities of the work of art. Paul Signac in Robert L. and Eugenia W. Herbert, 'Artists and Anarchism: Unpublished Letters of Pissarro, Signac and Others', p. 479

² Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Exhibition Guide for: *Equipo 57*, Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, 19 December 2007 - 2 March 2008

to challenge the domination of Tachisme, Arte Informel and Abstract-Expressionism in Western Europe and America which encouraged the idea of art as a vehicle for individualistic emotional impressions.

Equipo 57 believed that artists could not achieve any form of dynamic transformation, either aesthetically or socially, as individuals but must instead work as collectives and as part of a wider community. Collective and collaborative work was the only way of achieving change, as all transformations are the result of interactions and interrelations between individual elements or people rather than the result of the uniqueness of the individual element or the exceptional genius of the individual artist. Only through collective artistic research and the collaborative exchange of ideas between people researching in different fields could art bring about changes of a social dimension. They believed that, if the practice of artists could be transformed from the individual production of commoditised art objects into teams of researcher-artists producing common aesthetic knowledge through artistic processes that could be freely applied to socially useful forms like architecture, industrial and urban design, then art could play an active role in the transformation of society. As Duarte explains, within Equipo 57, knowledge, as well as money, was held in common and was collectively owned and distributed equally between the group:

After many months together, we began to understand clearly that the method of conceiving and promoting art had to be changed. There was a need to create a general movement capable of questioning the whole system. The certain formal consensus towards which the individual work of each one of us evolved, which was the result of constant discussion and analysis together, obliged us to have or establish a language that would enable us to see concepts objectively. Any discovery became common property. The wall of secrets, of little tricks – that are hidden or camouflaged – disappeared. In every discovery that is hidden or disguised, there is always a complex of having stolen something from the group, a feeling of guilt. Studying together freed us and did away with any fear of knowledge.³

Thus, keeping new knowledge to oneself was an act of theft or deception from the collective as a whole. Like the Neo-Impressionists they did not see collective research and production as a threat to the notion of autonomy and intellectual freedom, but on the contrary as a way of freeing artists from the shackles of competitive individualism and the private ownership of knowledge that are integral to capitalist ideology. Instead they understood the idea of the artist as an isolated subject as a false freedom that removed artists from their social consciousness to the detriment of their artistic and personal development.⁴ Furthermore, by asserting that arts exchange value was not located in its end product, the final art object, but in the process of aesthetic research that would provide a collective pool of knowledge, which was free for anyone to use and apply in any way they wished, they

³ *Thirty Years Later: Marta González Orbegozo interviews Equipo 57* in Marta González Orbegozo and Belén Díaz de Rábago (Eds.), *Equipo 57*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 1993 p.20

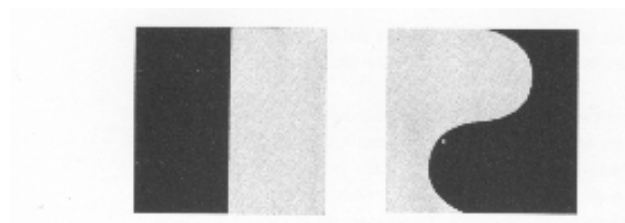
⁴ For more on this see: Ángel Llorente Hernández, *Equipo 57* in Marta González Orbegozo and Belén Díaz de Rábago (Eds.), *Equipo 57*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 1993 p.54

sought to undermine the commodity fetishism and individualism that was inherent in the way that art was circulated in society through the networks of dealers, galleries and markets.

Like the Neo-Impressionists before them, Equipo 57 aimed to utilise scientific theory to develop a new unified aesthetic that was capable of transforming society by expanding the way in which people sensed and perceived. They determined that this new system should be derived from scientific rationalist methods, in order to prevent individual gestures impinging on the creation of a universal aesthetic that could be collectively received:

Every aesthetic system should have its age and there is no art without an aesthetic system. At present, we see a need to introduce scientific rationalism in art in order to create a unity of style that will be the true quotient of our age... Art ceases to be parochial, translating private feelings, and enters the broader conscience of a universal word.⁵

They thus worked together as a collective team to gradually define the first theoretical propositions of their principle method: *The Interactivity of Plastic Space*, which they published as a manifesto in November 1957.⁶ This text emphasized the collective interdependence of elements of media that are normally understood as differentiable such as form, colour, line and mass and stated that these constituents do not exist as autonomous independent elements but only in terms of their dynamic relationship with others.⁷ In their hypothesis *form-space*, which they see as being the basic formal inter-relationship that unites all artistic forms, is further broken down into *space-colour* in painting and *space-mass* and *space-air* in sculpture. Their theoretical principles were made publically available for anyone to use and could be applied not only by fine artists but also by architects and product designers to bring about a socially useful art that was fully integrated into everyday life praxis.⁸ They provided examples and diagrams that illustrated how to produce the most dynamic and active interrelations between elements of a composition:



⁵ Equipo 57, *Notes for a Manifesto*, Published on the occasion of the 'Exposición de Pintura Abstracta' held at the Asociación Artística Vizcaína, Bilbao, from 1st to 10th March, 1957. Reprinted in Marta González Orbegozo and Belén Díaz de Rábago (Eds.), *Equipo 57*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 1993 p.152

⁶ Equipo 57, *Interactivity of Plastic Space (1)*, Published simultaneously in Spanish and French, in Madrid, November 1957, on the occasion of the exhibition at the Sala Negra. Reprinted in Marta González Orbegozo and Belén Díaz de Rábago (Eds.), *Equipo 57*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 1993, pp. 156-161

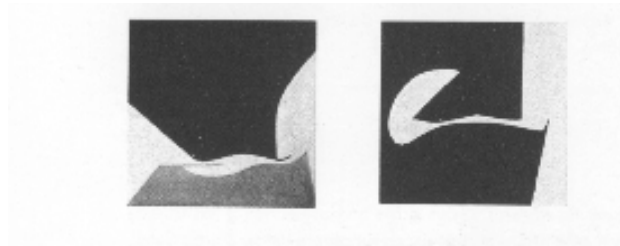
⁷ In the interactivity of plastic space, form, colour, line and mass do not exist as independent, autonomous elements. All is space differentiated by its dynamic function; interactivity has its origin in concatenated spatial action; active manifestations without which plastic space does not exist. Equipo 57, *Interactivity of Plastic Space (1)*, Published simultaneously in Spanish and French, in Madrid, November 1957, on the occasion of the exhibition at the Sala Negra. Reprinted in Marta González Orbegozo and Belén Díaz de Rábago (Eds.), *Equipo 57*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 1993, pp. 156-161

⁸ For more on this see: Ángel Llorente Hernández, *Equipo 57* in Marta González Orbegozo and Belén Díaz de Rábago (Eds.), *Equipo 57*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 1993, p.54

Two adjoining spaces are dynamically inactive, when their common limit is a straight line or a compensatory curve, its position in the picture being of no account.



The displacement of the neutral points of this limit leads to Interactivity.



In order that Interactivity may be produced, it is necessary to sensitize the edges of the channel according to the spatial currents that act in that zone.⁹

As these diagrams illustrate, the basic rules of their aesthetic system were that at least three colour spaces are required but preferably four, at least two of these colour spaces must touch the outer edges of the painting and that neutral points of straight lines or balanced curves must be displaced and sensitized with flections and incidence angles to create dynamism and interactivity.¹⁰ By breaking down artistic forms into their primary interrelations rather than into their primary elements they sought to create a revolutionary art based on dynamic movement and collective relationships rather than individualism and stasis. It was hoped that this change from separate static forms to dynamic interrelations between forms, could instigate a transformation from individual to collective and class-consciousness and thus stimulate a desire for revolutionary social change. In the display a selection of these diagrams will be made into large-scale vinyl wall panels in order to immediately convey the rationalist basis of Equipo 57's compositions, to demonstrate that they considered the research process as significant as the final art objects, and to communicate that they intended to share their research with a wider community of artists and designers.

Equipo 57 applied their *Theory of Interactivity* directly to their collectively produced paintings, which were divided spatially into strongly differentiated units of colour,

⁹ Equipo 57, *Interactivity of Plastic Space (1)*, Published simultaneously in Spanish and French, in Madrid, November 1957, on the occasion of the exhibition at the Sala Negra. Reprinted in Marta González Orbegozo and Belén Díaz de Rábago (Eds.), *Equipo 57*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 1993, pp. 158-160

¹⁰ In order for a unit of space to be made up, it is necessary that at least two color spaces touch the outer edges of the painting. In order to accomplish interactivity – mutual operation – at least three color spaces are required.

A: When the three color spaces touch the edge of the painting there must be at least one incidence angle and, in relation to the third color space, only one inflexion area.

B: When there are only two color spaces in contact with the edge of the painting there must be two incidence angles and two inflexion areas.

See: Equipo 57, *Text for the Thorvaldsens Museum*, Published in Copenhagen, March 1958. On the occasion of the exhibition at the Thorvaldsens Museum. Reprinted in Marta González Orbegozo and Belén Díaz de Rábago (Eds.), *Equipo 57*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 1993, p. 162

where colour is used purely as the basis of this spatial differentiation rather than to express any particular emotional or cultural value. However, in marked contrast to the Neo-Impressionist's divisionist technique, the coloured units do not remain separate from each other but impose on each other's natural space, cutting in and interacting with each spatial form. Equipo 57's mathematical system for dividing their canvases, involved each coloured unit, interacting with as many of the other units in as many different ways as possible, in order to create the most dynamic compositions. Nonetheless, Signac's interpretation and application of Charles Henry's dynamogenic theories can be directly related to the theories of dynamic interactivity developed by Equipo 57. Both aimed to utilise meticulously calculated combinations of colour and line to stimulate new levels of consciousness in the viewer in order to open up their minds to both new ways of perceiving their environment and the possibility of changing it.

The juxtaposition of the work of Equipo 57 and the Neo-Impressionists would emphasise the similarities and differences between their theorisation and actualization of collective practice. Equipo 57's conception of their art as a form of useful 'scientific' research that could contribute towards societal change is directly comparable to the way in which Signac conceived that the divisionist technique should be used by a community of artists. Equipo 57's method of collective production, was, however, much more absolute and formalised than the Neo-Impressionists and reflected their commitment to Marxist-Communist rather than Anarchist-Communist beliefs. Thus, although the Neo-Impressionist's did not believe that they themselves actually needed to produce work collectively, only to work with a common approach; Equipo 57 produced and authored their work exclusively as a collective, sought to collectivize visual research and aesthetic knowledge and to create a rational and objective aesthetic system, free from individual expression, that would be owned by the whole community and be equally applicable to all people in all places in all times.

The Equipo 57 work I have chosen to include in the exhibition to communicate these ideas is the film and painting series *Interactividad Cine I*. I have selected this work as it is the most exemplary materialization of the collective's *Theory of Interactivity* and because it involves both collective production and reception. Almost as soon as they had defined their formula, Equipo 57 began to explore the possibility of producing movement and dynamic interrelations between works as well as within them. Film represented an ideal form because it emphasises the interrelations between images rather than the images themselves and because it was a collectively received medium that could thus help to create a change in collective consciousness. For *Interactividad Cine I*, they collectively produced a monumental series of 416 gouache paintings, which were filmed in sequence to create a continuity of dynamic movement. This series of paintings were precisely formulated to work in dynamic relationship to those immediately before and after it, in order to create a sequence of movement progressing at a similar rate to a film projector.¹¹ The work thus operated as a collective of paintings where each work was dependent and

¹¹See: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Room 411 Guide, *Abstract Art: Geometry and Movement*, downloaded from http://www.museoreinasofia.es/coleccion/coleccion-2/sala-411_en.html on 20.03.12

connected to the others, and what was important was the relationship between these works rather than the individual art object. In the exhibition a selection of the gouache paintings will be shown alongside the film itself and juxtaposed with the Paul Signac painting *In the Time of Harmony*. The individual gouaches will be hung in a series of three, five picture long strips. Each strip will represent a short sequence of the film, showing a gradual shift in the interrelationship between forms. Sequences that feature similar colours and shapes to the Signac painting, such as those will be selected in order to reinforce the visual connection between the works.

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Interactividad Cine I, 1957, Gouache on paper, 340 x 510 mm (each), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid

The primary purpose of juxtaposing these two bodies of work is to demonstrate that the differences between their political positions on collectivism resulted in distinct ideas about how the collectivist ideal could be applied to artistic practice and processes. By physically juxtaposing works by Equipo 57 with divisionist paintings by the Neo-Impressionists we can also visually highlight the common scientific rationality of their methods. This visual pairing would also enable direct comparison between the way each group spatially divided their canvases.



Although these spatial divisions may seem a superficial point of comparison, for these two specific groups they were the result of a highly rationalised process of image formation and are thus the one aspect that defined their work and their practice. Their different approaches to spatial division are particularly important to compare as they visually articulate the different visions of the ideal collectivist society they hoped to help realise. The spatial configuration of Equipo 57's canvases and films, where the various coloured units exist not as autonomous elements but as part of dynamic interrelations with others are a formalist articulation of Marx's idea that 'it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, it is their social being that determines their consciousness'.¹² Equipo 57's belief in Marxist Communism, and in collective production as a political, social and aesthetic force is thus reflected in the delineation and formal articulation of their work; just as the atomised division of Neo-Impressionist canvases reflected their belief in the idea of collective harmony through individual autonomy.

The images originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The images were originally sourced at: www.caac.es/descargas/hoj_e57_ingles.pdf

Equipo 57, Bench, 1960, Beech wood and stainless steel

It is also important that we include an example of Equipo 57's attempts to apply their *theory of interactivity* to architecture and furniture design in order to communicate the idea that they saw the primary purpose of their aesthetic research as its transferability to the production of more socially useful objects. These attempts were based on the group's experiments with hyperbolic paraboloids as a means of creating more dynamic interrelations than Euclidean geometry could produce. I have proposed, for inclusion in the display, the bench illustrated above, which is comprised of interrelating hyperbolic paraboloids in order to visually communicate this point. As this particular bench is a reproduction of the original, it can also, importantly, be used as a functional seating apparatus in the exhibition, on which visitors can sit to view the film *Interactividad Cine I*. This is important as Equipo 57 would not have intended their furniture to be displayed as precious art object, but rather that they would have a functional social use. I have also proposed the inclusion of a hyperbolic sculpture in order to provide a direct visual link to the third group project, featured in the exhibition, the *Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef* participatory art project which is similarly centred on hyperbolic geometry.

The *Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef* project was developed by the Institute for Figuring (IFF), a not for profit organisation, which was set up and is directed by Margaret Wertheim, a popular science writer with a background in mathematics and physics,

¹² K. Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, (From the Preface).

and her twin sister Christine Wertheim, a professor at Cal Arts and active feminist poet with a background in the literal and visual arts. The act of figuring (to form or shape, to trace, to reckon or calculate, to represent in a diagram or picture, to ornament or adorn with a design or pattern) unites the practices of art and science, and thus their respective disciplines, and defines the field of interest of the Institute, which aims to advance the aesthetic appreciation of science and to promote artistic modes of doing and making as pedagogical models for increasing scientific understanding.

The work of the feminist mathematician, Dr Daina Taimina of Cornell University, provided the initial impetus for the *Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef* project.¹³ Dr Taimina provided an important contribution in the field of mathematic pedagogy with her discovery that crochet represented the perfect medium for constructing pedagogical models of hyperbolic geometry – a solution that had apparently evaded the male-dominated mathematical community for decades. Hyperbolic forms were of particular interest to the Wertheim sisters for the same reason that they preoccupied Equipo 57: because they represent a means of re-imagining our relationship with our environment and our social relations with others. As the Wertheim's explain in the following quote, their use of hyperbolic geometry is motivated by a desire to push beyond the artificial rectilinear understanding of the world resulting from an over-emphasis on and an over-use of Euclidean geometry imposed by a patriarchal vision of society:

We have built a world of rectilinearity—the rooms we inhabit, the skyscrapers we work in, the gridlike arrangements of our streets, the freeways we cruise on our daily commute speak to us in straight lines. We have learned to play by Euclidean rules because two thousand years of geometric training have engraved the grid in our minds.

This artificial and patriarchal rectilinear understanding of the world can be understood from an eco-feminist position to promote the idea that man is should dominate nature and is therefore held, at least partially, responsible for the destruction of the natural environment. Just as Equipo 57 intended their sculptures of hyperbolic forms to stimulate more dynamic social relations, the Wertheim's theorised that by engaging people in the hyperbolic forms present in nature through active play they can thus raise consciousness of this alternative way of imagining their world, their environment and the relations within it. By encouraging people to move beyond thinking through the grid they could potentially open up a new field of possibilities that provide a challenge to preconceived ways of thinking and doing and move beyond the current political stall. Furthermore, as coral is an organic manifestation of hyperbolic geometry, the Wertheim sisters recognised that crocheting would be the perfect medium through which to create an artwork intended to draw attention to the destruction of coral reefs by global warming. In 2005, the Wertheim's therefore decided to instigate a collective, participatory art

¹³ The IFF hosted a lecture by Dr. Taimina, in 2005, based on her experiments with hyperbolic crochet, and an exhibition dedicated to these forms

project, through the IFF, entitled the *Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef*, which aimed, not only to highlight the plight of the coral reefs and challenge the way people relate to nature, but also to promote the values of collective action, collective knowledge and making as a means of both active thinking and political agency. This project was thus influenced by the values of leftist pedagogy, eco-feminism, socialist-feminism and craftivism, which is in itself a unique confluence of anti-capitalism, the DiY movement, environmentalism, collective activism and third-wave feminism.

The images originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The images were originally sourced at: <http://crochetcoralreef.org/about/>

An example of a real brain coral and a crocheted brain coral from the Institute for Figuring Collection.

The *Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef* involves several types of collective production that have been brought together under the rubrics of one project. It was initiated by the twin sisters Margaret and Christine Wertheim who began crocheting hyperbolic corals together at home in their living room. This informal, intimate and domestic form of collaborative labour revolving around family relations or friendship networks is incredibly common in women's art production, but is frequently overlooked as a form of collective production because it is seen as natural and organic rather than formalised, deliberate or political. Knitting and sewing circles, for example, have rarely been represented as either a political or collective pursuit despite the history of knitting as a collective political action. During the American Revolution, for example, American women brought knitting into the public domain as a civic action. They occupied churches and other public spaces to perform what were effectively collective 'knit ins', publically declaring that they would clothe their families in 'naught but homespun' in order to protest against the Stamp Tax imposed by English colonists. However, third-wave feminist artists, activists and crafters have increasingly sought to harness these informal, private and domestic modes of collective labour to achieve wider internationalist political outcomes. The Revolutionary Knitting Circles that were founded in Canada and have since become a global phenomenon, for instance, promote organised collective knitting actions as protests against global corporate capitalism, including a *Global Knit-In* staged during the 2002 G8 Summit. Similarly, Christine Wertheim has described the need to reinvigorate feminist politics through a larger-scale collective mobilisation:

It seems as if the current stall is related to an inability to collectivize on a large scale. I don't understand why this is so difficult for us now. But I believe it is one of the most important contemporary questions.¹⁴

The IFF's model of collective practice is thus motivated by a desire to conjoin the reclamation of traditional women's work in third-wave feminism with the collective consciousness and community arts movements of second-wave feminism, through a reconnection to broader international social justice movements.

As such, the *Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef* was envisaged by the Wertheim's as a collective enterprise that could engage an international audience with feminist politics, environmental issues and anti-capitalist and social justice movements, as well as increasing scientific knowledge by making and doing in both private and public spheres.¹⁵ Rather than expanding the project through their informal networks the Wertheim's decided to expand the idea of the knitting circle into the digital realm. They therefore put out an open call on their website for people to contribute hyperbolic corals to the reef. Following the open-source collaboration model they also developed a set of instructions or rules for the production of these hyperbolic forms based on mathematical principles, which they published online and developed into a book which serves as a guide to hyperbolic geometry through crochet, aimed at non-mathematicians. Whereas, the Neo-Impressionists were concerned with sharing their technique with fellow artists, and Equipo 57 aimed to share their *theory of interactivity* with an expanded field of creative practitioners, the IFF were primarily aiming to share their methodology with amateurs and lay crafters as opposed to professional artists or mathematicians, in order to increase the public engagement with mathematic principles, to raise consciousness about environmental issues and stimulate collective political agency amongst women. Their call for participants was enthusiastically received and resulted in over 40 participants from across the world contributing hundreds of individually produced corals that were formed into a single collective coral reef. Since then the project has grown exponentially and the IFF have developed countless other sub and satellite reefs in locations across the world, which has led to this constantly evolving project being considered one of the largest ever collective community art projects.¹⁶ This approach to collective production, although drawing on the collective practice of 1970's feminist community and participatory art projects, in that they have focused on skills that can be taught and shared, and the DiY movement, in that people are invited to produce their own corals, is significantly different from these precursors. The *Coral Reef* as a totality was completed by a collective of people who did not physically produce work collectively and who, for the most part, have never even met. It therefore has much more in common with contemporaneous models of indirect online collaboration, which are characterised by fluidity, open access and open-endedness.

For the IFF the advantage of the indirect collaboration model over physical collective production is that it encourages individual experimentation and play rather than

¹⁴ <http://lemonhound.blogspot.co.uk/2010/07/elizabeth-hall-christine-wertheim.html>

¹⁵ <http://crochetcoralreef.org/about/history.php> accessed 04/12/12

¹⁶ <http://forwardcouncil.com/curated-items/34/the-hyperbolic-crochet-coral-reef>

expecting members to conform rigidly to a set of principles in order to achieve stylistic unity, such as with Equipo 57. The idea of engaging adults in active play and participation, which is promoted in terms of both child and adult education by socialist pedagogy, is central to the IFF's core mission. For the *Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef* participants were invited to follow instructions to produce their own mathematically precise corals, in order to learn the technique, but were then encouraged to develop their own variations on the algorithms in order to both stimulate active mathematical experimentation and to produce a diverse body of different forms. As Wertheim explains their approach to collective production has had a significant impact on the final form of the reef as an artwork:

While the process that brings these models into being is algorithmic, endless permutations of the underlying formulae result in a constantly surprising panoply of shapes. The quality of yarn, style of stitch, and tightness of the crochet all affect the finished forms so that each is as individual as a living organism.

Indirect collaboration has meant that the final 'corals' are aesthetically diverse and are therefore more consistent with the way these forms develop in nature, where small variations or mutations in the basic underlying algorithms create a litany of different shapes and forms. In this sense, the work has much in common with the Neo-Impressionists in that the participants involved in the project are afforded a high degree of autonomy and encouraged to do whatever they want within the system of articulation made available to them in order to achieve a more harmonious whole. The *Crochet Coral Reef* must therefore be understood as a manifestation of a multi-faceted form of collective production that falls somewhere in between the formalised Marxist-Communist collectivism of Equipo 57, where the work is physically produced together, and the atomised Anarchist-Communist collectivity of the Neo-Impressionists where the work is produced individually and united only by a shared method but is not consolidated as a collectively authored work.

However, in spite of their encouragement of participants to create individual and autonomous variations, the project is underpinned and made harmonious by introducing a small degree of play into a rational and scientific base. It is the rational and scientific base, a simple algorithm – make “n” stitches, then increase by one; repeat ad infinitum – that provides a challenge to the conception of art as self-expression and the artist as an isolated genius. Anyone can, in theory at least, learn these basic methods and through the smallest intended or unintended variations they can produce an entirely original work of art. This therefore calls into question our notion of both artistic and scientific genius and brings discovery and innovation into the realm of the ordinary, the everyday and the amateur. The Wertheim's by positioning the project as a community participatory arts project under the banner of the Institute for Figuring, rather than ascribing the project with their own authorship, and by meticulously crediting everyone who has contributed to the project, are attempting to ensure that the project is understood to be the result of collectively, rather than individually, produced knowledge and labour power. The

vast scale of the reef is intended to provide an immediate contrast with the intricacy of the individual corals, so as to visualise the sheer volume of labour time which has been collectively contributed to the project. As Margaret Wertheim describes the purpose of this is to provide a challenge to the idea of individual genius in the Western art world and to demonstrate the political potential of collective action:

In the upper echelons of the art world, what is valorized is the individual genius of the artist. But what this project taps into is the opposite of that. There are many tens of thousands of hours of work in this totality. When you walk into an art exhibition where there is more than five hundred people's work on display, the sheer congealed hours of human labor helps you see that it is just simply is physically impossible for one person to do this much work. The totality of what thousands of people produced is much more — both greater and more beautiful — than what any individual genius, one individual person, could produce.¹⁷

This quote demonstrates that the choice of crochet as a medium is also intended to signify a resistance to corporate global capitalism as a visible demonstration of what would be termed 'unproductive labour' under a capitalist mode of production. Crochet as a medium has managed to resist industrial capitalism as, unlike knitting and other forms of textile production, there has never been a machine invented that can replicate the crochet technique. Crochet has thus remained purely a handicraft, as the labour time involved means that a profit could rarely be extracted from this form of production, and it therefore can only ever be considered 'unproductive' from a capitalistic viewpoint. Through the public exhibition of such a mass of accumulated collective labour time, that is so clearly unproductive in purely capitalistic terms, they aim to signify that production can have a value as a form of creation, doing or making that does not have profit as its end goal. The very act of making for personal use, pleasure, active learning or political goals, is an act of resistance to capitalist values that evaluate all forms of production in terms of their immediate economic contribution.

The use of crochet to create this project is also intended as a feminist challenge to the romantic idea of the isolated male genius figure that dominated the Western conception of art and science. Crocheting is essentially a form of aesthetic and scientific knowledge that has been shared between women across generations for at least two centuries. Although crochet projects are produced individually as well as collectively, the knowledge is collective and is shared informally through patterns and the communal and cross-generational teaching of the crochet craft. The recent revival of crochet circles — both real and virtual — under the rubrics of third-wave feminism, is evidence of this understanding of the crochet as a form of knowledge-sharing and community building centred round the value of collectivity. However, the binary base of crocheting is intrinsically mathematical and the craft has thus been frequently compared to computer programming. Nonetheless, whereas

¹⁷From a interview with Margaret Wertheim: For full text see: <http://hilobrow.com/2010/01/18/qa-margaret-wertheim/>

paintings and sculptures based on geometrical or mathematical principles, such as those by Equipo 57, are associated with rationality, abstract reasoning and modernity, crochet instantly signifies, intuitive thinking rather than abstract reasoning, tradition rather than progress, handiwork rather than intellectual work, and idle work rather than productive labour. As such crochet tends to connote something 'woolly' and represent the very antithesis of formalist aesthetics and geometrical abstraction. However, the use of crochet to generate mathematically complex hyperbolic models, such as those produced by Dr Daina Taimina, makes visual the mathematical and rational base of crochet as a medium and challenges these artificial divisions and hegemonic notions that devalue the intellectual labour of both craft skills and traditionally women's work. By juxtaposing one of these models, with a hyperbolic sculpture by Equipo 57 in the display, we can invite the audience to compare and contrast these forms, and thus effectively demonstrate the irrationality of these divisions.

The images originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The images were originally sourced at: http://crochetcoralreef.org/contributors/daina_taimina.php

A mathematically precise model of Hyperbolic space by Dr Daina Taimina

The scientific application and positioning of crochet in the *Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef* specifically, is politically radical as it is intended to challenge the privileging of individually over collectively produced knowledge, abstract over applied forms of knowledge and the process of abstract reasoning over physical making in Western education. It is also political in its repositioning of what is traditionally considered an individual, private, frivolous and unproductive form of labour, as a collective, public and socially productive art form based on rational, scientific principles. The juxtaposition of this work with that of the Neo-Impressionists and Equipo 57 will therefore emphasise the common scientific and rationalist basis of all three bodies of work, however it will also serve to highlight the aspect that is so different about the IFF's approach – the use of a traditional and feminised form of handicraft. It is the 'crochet' aspect of the *Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef* project that will clearly articulate its feminist and craftivist political base.

The *Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef* will therefore be included in this display as a pertinent and contemporary example of the politicised application of a scientific methodology to collective art production. I have selected a small sub-reef from the project, entitled the *Bleached Reef*, for the display as the full reef is too large to showcase in its entirety using this curatorial approach. The *Bleached Reef* also most

immediately conveys that the project is concerned with eco-feminist politics by visually referencing, through a limited and subdued palette, the bleaching effect that occurs when corals are killed.

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The image was originally sourced at: http://crochetcoralreef.org/about/bleached_reef.php

The Bleached Reef, Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef, The Institute for Figuring, 2007

Presuming that not every visitor who attends the exhibition will have a comprehensive knowledge of hyperbolic geometry it is also important to provide some contextual information that communicates the basic principles. One means of doing this is to include in the display a monitor displaying the TED talk by Margaret Wertheim entitled *The beautiful math of coral* in which she engagingly outlines in under fifteen minutes the basic principles of hyperbolic geometry and the ideas behind the *Hyperbolic Coral Reef Project*.

The exhibition of a TED talk is particularly appropriate to this section of the exhibition as TED is concerned with increasing engagement with scientific ideas and their website operates under creative commons which is, in turn part, of the copyleft movement. Creative Commons is a form of licensing that allows the creator to waive some of their intellectual property rights in order to free up the distribution of knowledge and creative tools. It is intended to provide a challenge to the permissions culture inherent in contemporary capitalist societies and to reconfigure the role of the commons in the 'information age'. It can thus be seen as a digital relation of the idea of creating a common aesthetic system and collective pool of knowledge which was promoted by both Equipo 57 and the Neo-Impressionists.

It is also important that people have the opportunity to participate in physically producing a hyperbolic crochet coral either in the exhibition itself or at home. I therefore propose providing a set of instructions, such as those outlined below, for

the crocheting of the corals which people can copy and take home. I also propose providing a workspace within the display with crocheting tools, materials and instructions where people can make their own coral to contribute to the reef.

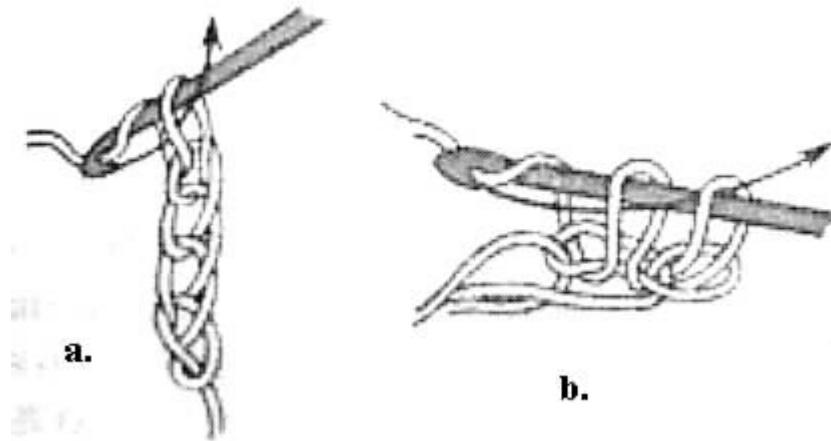


Figure 2. Crochet stitches for the hyperbolic plane.

First you should chose a yarn which will not stretch a lot. Every yarn will stretch a little but you need one which will keep its shape. Now you are ready to start the stitches:

1. Make your **beginning chain stitches** (Figure 2a). (Topologists may recognize that as the stitches in the Fox-Artin wild arc!) About 20 chain stitches for the beginning will be enough.
2. **For the first stitch in each row** insert the hook into the 2nd chain from the hook. Take yarn over and pull through chain, leaving 2 loops on hook. Take yarn over and pull through both loops. One single crochet stitch has been completed. (Figure 2b.)
3. **For the next N stitches** proceed exactly like the first stitch except insert the hook into the next chain (instead of the 2nd).
4. **For the $(N+1)$ st stitch** proceed as before except insert the hook into the same loop as the N -th stitch.
5. **Repeat Steps 3 and 4** until you reach the end of the row.
6. **At the end of the row** before going to the next row do one extra chain stitch.
7. **When you have the model as big as you want**, you can stop by just pulling the yarn through the last loop.

This work will be juxtaposed with the work of Equipo 57 and the Neo-Impressionists. These works can be related through their development of a distinct scientific and rationalist methodology for the purpose of sharing and collectivising knowledge and to challenge the romantic conception of the artist as an isolated genius. Like, Equipo 57 and the Neo-Impressionists the IFF have conceived of artistic production as a mode of generating and sharing scientific and aesthetic research with a wider community. Like Equipo 57 they locate the primary value of this practice in the making process rather than in the final form of the work. All three groups also share

a common perspective that activating people's senses is a key means of expanding the way they perceive and engage with knowledge and that this, in turn, can change the way people relate to their environment. However, whereas, the Neo-Impressionist's and Equipo 57 rely on the sense of sight alone and aim only to create a more dynamic and active mode of reception for their art, the IFF incorporate the importance of touch, tangibility, and the active participation of the viewer (or in this case the doer) in the processes of doing and making the work.

The final group I have selected for inclusion in this display are the Slovenian art collective OHO, who developed their collective practice in relation to New Left theory in the late 1960's and early seventies. Including the work of OHO in this exhibition, and juxtaposing their work with the likes of Equipo 57, will not only enable us to reposition Eastern European collectivism as politicized practice but will also allow the viewer to make a direct comparison between collective art production in capitalist and communist contexts. Boris Groys has argued that the most distinguishing feature of Eastern European art, as a distinct typology, is its collective character and that this collective ideal stems directly from the Communist ideology that pervaded Eastern European culture during the majority of the twentieth century.¹⁸ However, he has criticized Western art institutions for neglecting to demonstrate the political basis for the collective practice of unofficial artists groups, such as OHO, in Communist countries simply because they are not always straightforwardly oppositional.¹⁹ From a Western perspective, collective production like that of, Equipo 57, is understood as political in terms of how it reacts against the cultural and institutional norms dictated by an art market which requires the artist to operate as a lone figure of unique genius with a commodifiable name and identity. However, the collective production of unofficial art in both Communist East-Europe is just as, if not more, a directly influenced by left-wing politics as it is in the West. Firstly, the frequency and naturalness of the collective production of art in these countries is a direct consequence of living and working in a communist society: therefore the formation of these collectives is in itself influenced by left-wing politics. And secondly, the work of these unofficial collectives often combine a challenge to both the totalitarian Communist position on collectivism and the capitalistic notion of art as essentially individualistic self-expression, instead envisioning a more humanistic form of collective living that allows for individual development and fulfillment. As such, *Art Turning Left* represents an important opportunity to play a part in remedying this misrepresentation of Eastern European artistic projects by positioning examples of work, produced in these contexts, in a section about the influence of left-wing values of collective arts production alongside works by Western collectives.

OHO's initial approach to collectivity was characterised by a fluid and open membership revolving around a core group of friends; existing as more of an art movement than as a collective.²⁰ This fluid approach to collectivism, as Boris Groys

¹⁸ Groys, Boris, *Back From the Future*, Third Text

¹⁹ See: Boris Groys, *Back to the Future*, *Third Text*, Vol. 17, Issue 4, 2003, 323–331 p.

²⁰ During this time, the name OHO acted in a similar way to Fluxus, in that it served more as a conceptual label that tied together various members' activities which included OHO editions, poetry, film works and happenings. Different members would take part in each other's actions or performances and would make

suggests, was the result of the group's social context in Communist Yugoslavia, where collectivity was the key social value, which underpinned every aspect of life. Art was thus not considered first and foremost an individual mode of expression and production but instead as a collective and social activity. As there was no art market for unofficial art and only a limited audience, art was not perceived to be a competitive activity and the attribution of authorship and intellectual property were, as a consequence, largely superfluous concerns for the unofficial artists. However, this display will focus on work produced from 1969 onwards, after they decided to formalise their collective practice as the OHO Group with four permanent members, Milenko Matanovič, David Nez, Marko Pogačnik, and Andraž Šalamun.²¹

In this display we will demonstrate that OHO's attempts to find a rational and objective approach to collective art practice was underpinned by New Left philosophy which developed into a methodology they called Reism. OHO Reism was based on a combination of different ideas and methodologies, including Nouveau Roman literature, phenomenological philosophy, structuralism, post-structuralism and semiotics, that they came across primarily through the writings of the French New Left. In particular, they were influenced by Marxist ideas about alienation and reification that had been reintroduced into contemporary discourse by the strong movement of Neo-Marxists in Yugoslavia during the sixties that were part of OHO's circle of friends.²² OHO's Reism is primarily concerned with challenging the hierarchy of the subject-object relationship that has developed in both capitalist and communist societies. In Reism, the 'thing' is essentially different from the 'object' as the 'object' is always determined by the 'subject': human perceptions and practical needs always determine the 'object' whereas in reistic thought the thing is recognised as a being in its own right. The idea is that the hierarchical subject-object relationship prevents 'things' from existing as autonomous beings, that are independent from man and therefore also masks the richness and plurality of their qualities. Reism is thus a way of looking at the world with a different form of consciousness and with a particularly focussed attention that concentrates on the present and immediate reality of things, their details, qualities and differences, independent of their use value to man.²³ For OHO, Reism provided a way to view the world differently from the consumerist culture in capitalist societies where man viewed things as possessions and the workaday mentality and banal reality of everyday life in a Communist economy where everything is viewed in relation to its use value. As Reism was the framework through which they constructed their methodology, these neo-Marxist and New Leftist ideas must be understood to have changed the way they produced their work and carried out their practice.

Like Equipo 57, the Neo-Impressionists and the Institute for Figuring, OHO

suggestions or improvise spontaneously as part of a piece. For more on this see:

<http://selfishstudios.com/2010/09/07/oho-after-oho-museum-of-contemporary-art-zagreb-4-9-2010/> accessed 29.04.2012

²¹ MACBA catalogue. http://www.macba.cat/PDFs/conceptes_expo_eng.pdf

²² Rudi Šeligo, for example, was strongly influenced to develop his own version of the Nouveau Roman by Lucien Goldmann's interpretation of the literary genre through the Marxist concept of reification. For more on this see Zabel, p 419-420

²³ IG Plamen and Pogačnik eulogised this unique reality of objects, in their OHO manifesto which set out their reistic approach: 'The objects are real. We approach the reality of an object by accepting it as it is. But what is the object like? The first thing we perceive about it is silence. Yet the object has things to offer!' From: I. G. Plamen and Marko Pogačnik *The OHO Manifest*, cited in T. Brejc, *OHO as an artistic phenomenon 1966-1971*, in OHO 1966-1971, SKUC, Ljubljana, 1978, p.13

challenged the idea of art as a vehicle for self-expression and the notion of the artist as an isolated genius. OHO sought to develop an approach to art practice that was consistent with the Reistic worldview which did not consider a thing to be a carrier of human thoughts and emotions or an embodiment of an artist's expressiveness, but instead as an equal being that had qualities in its own right. Following the Reist logic, an artwork therefore had to be as objective as possible and avoid reflecting the expression or emotion of the artist in any form, in order to avoid appropriating and repressing the nature of the thing. As OHO explain their aim was to intervene as minimally as possible in order to only register and objectively present 'the unheard voice of the thing':

We draw close to the reality of things by accepting the thing as it is... A thing, we notice first is silent. But the thing has something to offer!

OHO therefore used processes to produce their work that were as objective as possible and eliminated traces of the artists expressive hand, such as casting, impressing, photography and film. OHO also attempted to fracture the sanctity of the art object by labelling their work everyday objects ('pop artikli') whilst simultaneously elevating the status of everyday mass produced items by turning them into artworks.²⁴ Pogačnik's *Casts of bottles and other objects*, will therefore be included in the display, as it is a clear materialisation of the Reistic vision of collectivity based around a community of equally valued things and the subversion of the idea of art as self-expression through the 'objective' process of casting.

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Marko Pogačnik, *Plaster casts of bottles and other objects*, 1965-68

However, this display of OHO's work will focus on the body of work they produced between 1969 and 1971 where they concentrated on creating a collective aesthetic system through which to articulate both their collective and individually produced actions. OHO developed a diagrammatic collective format for the presentation of their work that resembled pages from a scientific textbook. They used this highly-stylized form of documentation to record their actions in order to reinforce the idea that they were using an objective methodology and that, even when they

²⁴ They began labelling the art objects they produced 'pop artikli', as a reference to the term 'artikel' which translates as 'item' and was used to refer to mass-produced consumer products during the emergence of a limited free-market consumerist society within Yugoslavia.

individually authored and instigated a work, it should be understood as part of a wider collective body of knowledge. One of these drawings, produced by Pogačnik as part of *Projekt OHO* series, even visualised in diagrammatic form how OHO conceived of their relation to each other and how their collective practice related to the world and the cosmological sphere.

The images originally presented here cannot be made freely available via LJMU Digital Collections because of copyright restrictions. The images were originally sourced from: OHO, A Retrospective, Moderna galerija Ljubljana 1.2. – 13.3 1994

Marko Pogačnik, Part of Projekt OHO series, 1970

This illustration is reflective of the artists' reistic position in relation to collectivity, which stresses the need for total equality and harmony between all bodies, and between all bodies and the community, the landscape and the universe. A section of this drawing will be therefore be recreated as a wall panel in order to immediately and visually demonstrate the position of the group in relation to collective practice. All of these drawings and performances, as you can see by the images below, were

recorded and presented in the same diagrammatic and systematic style, which reinforced the idea that theirs was an objective approach to art-making that challenged the notion of art as a means of self-expression. The uniformity of this style of recording their performances and actions also reinforced the collective identity of the group, even when they were producing individual works.

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David Nez, *Projekt*, April 1970

Igor Zabel has described their methodology as a combination of two approaches, which might at first seem contradictory, 'rational programming' and 'coincidence and play', but are in fact complimentary and coherent ways to create an objective aesthetic system.²⁵ Rational Programming involved the use of mathematic sequences and problems to construct drawings and performances. An example of

²⁵ Igor Zabel, A short History of OHO, East Art Map, 415

this approach is David Nez's *Project* of April 1970, realised at the IV Belgrade Triennial, which was based on Zenon's aporia that 'one cannot cross the stadium as one – because the infinite divisibility of the distance – cannot even start to walk'.²⁶ By including this work in the exhibition, we can draw a comparison to Equipo 57's use of mathematical formula to objectively derive compositions and the Neo-Impressionists use of Charles Henry's aesthetic protractor to generate dynamic and harmonious lines. However, the ludistic approach also presented a way of subverting the idea of artistic authorship and producing an objective image, free of individual expression, by employing strategies of random chance. An example of this approach, for inclusion in the exhibition is OHO's *Intercontinental Group Project (America – Europe)* of 1970. One part of this project involved four members of the group, in four different locations, looking at the sun and dropping matches from a height of 10cm on a piece of paper, and recording where they fell in order to construct a series of drawings.

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Marko Pogačnik, Section from: *Intercontinental group project: America – Europe*, 1970

The results of these experiments were recorded consistently through the same diagrammatic neutral format, where it is not the individual drawings that are important but the relationships between these drawings and the collective patterns they produce. These works are important to include as they exemplify how central the value of collectivity was to OHO's practice: even when they were geographically separated by thousands of miles the members of the group still chose to produce their work as a collective rather than as individual artists.

OHO's subversion of the idea of the art object as a vehicle for self-expression through 'objective' methodologies means that their work can be usefully juxtaposed with that of Equipo 57, the Institute For Figuring, and the Neo-Impressionists who all similarly attempted to use scientific rationale as an objective means of constructing images or producing sculptures. OHO's central aim of creating a collective harmony between all things, and between man and the environment, by attempting to alter the way people perceive their relationship to others, to things and to the environment, provides a further thematic link to the three other groups presented in

²⁶ OHO, *A Retrospective*, Moderna galerija Ljubljana 1.2. – 13.3 1994 p 84

the exhibition. Like the Neo-Impressionists and the Institute For Figuring they aimed to challenge the capitalistic idea that man should dominate nature, in order to create a more equal, more harmonious and thus less destructive relationship. However, perhaps most importantly, OHO's diagrammatic drawings and recordings of their performances and actions visually reveal the processes of production of each artwork with a unique clarity, which means that we could demonstrate the making of their work simply by exhibiting the work itself.

This case study has demonstrated that these four artist's groups have developed a scientific or at least 'quasi scientific' methodology in order to challenge the romantic idea of art as the self-expression of individual genius and to confront the competitive individualism and bourgeois values of capitalist societies. The advantage of utilising a combination of radical disjuncture and visual rhyme as a curatorial strategy is, therefore, that it would enable us to *effectively* communicate that this *is* a common approach to collective production that has been a consistent thread throughout the history of leftist art production, by bringing together examples from completely different places and times that are united only by the development of 'objective', quasi-scientific methodologies and the group's shared commitment to left-wing values. Furthermore, by selecting and juxtaposing examples of works which are poetically and visually connected in terms of shared colours, shapes and forms we can emphasise the unity between the work and present it as a coherent and distinct body of knowledge that has been purposefully selected and positioned by a curator. The aim of this strategy is, not only to make the display more visually appealing, but also to *affectively* stimulate the viewer to look for the commonalities between the works.

The strategy of radical disjuncture will, however, also allow the viewer to much more immediately compare the differences between each group's work. In this case, it will enable a comparison between how each group's political position resulted in their development of a different type of collective practice, and a different 'scientific' or at least, quasi-scientific methodology, that consequently influenced the final form of each artwork. So for example, the Neo-Impressionist's divisionist technique visually articulates their position on collectivism –individual autonomy in collective harmony – through the application of distinct individual brushstrokes that come together to form a harmonious composition. And OHO have literally drawn out their belief in a form of universal and total collectivism, based on equal and mutual relations between all spheres, all people and all things, in diagrammatic form. These particular artist groups have thus also be selected for inclusion because their different political positions on collectivism are visually materialised, and thus readable, in the artworks themselves.

Appendix 2

Analysis of Results from Exhibition Title Testing Survey, commissioned by Tate Liverpool from Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2012

Summary Of Conclusions

1. The results for the exhibition concept are extremely encouraging. The results of Question 3 'How appealing do you find the exhibition', a mean score of **7.4** which compares very favourably with the summer blockbuster exhibitions like *Chagall*, *Picasso* and *Turner*, *Monet*, *Twombly*, demonstrates that the exhibition concept is very appealing. **56%** of respondents scored the exhibition either a 10, 9 or 8 (very appealing), higher than *Chagall* and significantly higher than all exhibitions at Tate Britain other than *Picasso*, **10%** higher than *Migrations* and a huge **31%** higher than *Barry Flanagan*. This indicates that with the right title and the right marketing campaign, which accurately represent the exhibition concept, the show could be extremely successful and attract
2. Unfortunately there is a significant mismatch between the appeal of the exhibition and the appeal of the exhibition titles. The results demonstrate that none of the titles are particularly appealing and that Believe/Make/Share is actively off-putting. They compare negatively with the overall appeal of the exhibition, which is high, and therefore none of these titles should therefore be used. The highest results for the most appealing title were for 'Cause and Effect' (mean score **5.50**) and 'Left March' (mean score **5.10**) and 'Left March' was considered the title, which most accurately conveys the exhibition concept with a significantly higher rating of **57%** for either 'very' or 'quite' effective, compared to **34%** for 'Cause and Effect'.
3. Qualitative results demonstrated that Believe/Make/Share was specifically unappealing as it was too generic, utopic, and fantastical. Changing Making: Making Change was considered too generic and vague and also misled people into thinking the exhibition was about change in general or about how art changed politics. Cause and Effect was also unappealing as it was vague and misled people into thinking the exhibition was related to science. Left March was the only title to attract specifically positive comments. It was appealing as it was clear and direct and forward-thinking, but the military connotations of the word 'March' were off-putting.
4. The most common complaints about the title were that they were too vague and generic. This would indicate that more specific titles e.g. a title with the word 'left' in it, that more accurately reflect the exhibition concept would also be more appealing to people and result in a higher number of visitors. I would therefore recommend using a clear and direct title like 'Left

March' but avoiding words associated with militancy and dogma.

5. The majority of people understood that the general theme of the exhibition was about the relationship between art and politics from the titles we suggested. However, several people highlighted that they only understood what the exhibition was about from the subtitle and that the main titles were meaningless and vague.
6. An overwhelming majority of respondents, **95%**, understood the term, 'left' in its political meaning, associating the word with left-wing politics. Of these **33%** defined the left according to the specific values the exhibition is based around e.g. collectivism, equality, alternative economies and social progress. This is encouraging as it indicates that the majority of people will understand the relationship between the left and these specific values. These results indicate that we should not worry about people misunderstanding the term 'left' in the title as it immediately has political resonance with people.
7. The majority of respondents, **61%**, suggested titles which included the word left, such as Left-Leaning, Look Left and simply Left, or Art on the Left, which suggests that the majority of people are not put off by the term 'left' and would rather that the title of the exhibition actively reflected the concept. This indicates again that we should reconsider using the word 'left' in the title.
8. The results in answer to the question asking 'what is appealing about the exhibition' demonstrate that the political aspect of the exhibition is what is most appealing, and that the left-wing focus of this is what particularly resonates with many people. This indicates that we should select a title that does not shy away from these aspects and clearly demonstrates what the subject of the exhibition is, otherwise we will risk losing a lot of potential visitors to the exhibition. Some comments specifically mention that it is the clarity of the political angle that is appealing to them. However, it is also important to note that a high percentage of people were also specifically drawn to the range of art and artists mentioned and we therefore need to also ensure that this aspect is also represented in the title. I would therefore recommend choosing a clear and direct title that foreground the political dimension but also indicates the range of artists on offer and the diversity of approaches.
9. The individual comments in response to the question, also demonstrate that many people are self-identifying on a personal and political level with the theme of the exhibition and it is this factor that appeals to them the most. There are several comments in answer to the question that declare that the respondent finds it appealing as they are: 'a socialist' 'left-wing' or 'working class'.

10. Many people also specifically mentioned William Morris and highlighted the Arts and Crafts Movement as an appealing factor so we should also consider using the work and name of William Morris in the promotional material.
11. Encouragingly 26% of respondents stated specifically that they found nothing to be off-putting about the exhibition, with a further 9% not making any comment. The other results demonstrate that the political subject matter, the concentration on left-wing politics, or the possibility of political bias, are not significantly off-putting. Only **11%** of respondents specifically mentioned the political aspect or the subject-matter of the exhibition as being off-putting, compared to **52%** of people who found it to be appealing. It is worth pointing out that there were several respondents who listed as both appealing and off-putting depending on how it is handled. Only **6%** of people found the specific left-wing focus of the exhibition, or the possibility of political bias or one-sidedness to be off-putting. It should be noted that out of these respondents approximately half stated that they would still probably, or definitely visit the exhibition, indicating that they were just expressing a concern that it will be too dogmatic. This indicates that we should not be too worried about foregrounding the left-wing focus of the exhibition in the title as it more likely to be appealing than unappealing. However, we should take care to ensure we acknowledge the political impact of the right on art in the exhibition space and be clear that it is not only the left that has had an impact on art.
12. Other common responses to this question were concerns that the exhibition might be too dull (**4%**) or humourless, too worthy (**5%**), or too pretentious (**6%**). We could therefore consider using images of artworks that counteract these concerns in the promotional material to try and override this impression.
13. Of the respondents who stated that they 'probably' or 'definitely' wouldn't come, the majority stated that the reasons for their lack of attendance were either the distance or expensive of travel to Liverpool. It therefore might be worth considering working with train operators/transport operators to see if it is possible to work out a deal with reduced fares to visit the exhibition.
14. A high number of people had misunderstood the reference to the French Revolution (How the left changed art from the French Revolution to today) in the subtitle to mean that the exhibition was *only* about French art. We should therefore drop this reference from the subtitle so as not to mislead people. The vast majority of people did not pick up on the fact that this is about how art is 'made' or that it is concentrating on how things are produced, displayed and disseminated rather than the content and subject-matter of art works. Only 3 out of 288 respondents (**1%**) understood this from the titles. This is a unique selling point of the exhibition so it is important to get this across in the title or at least the subtitle. I would recommend changing the subtitle to 'how the left changed the way that art is made and done' or something similar.

- 15. Overall I would recommend that we do not use any of the titles that we suggested in the survey. I would recommend, that we reconsider using the word 'left' in the title as the results indicate that we should foreground the political aspect of the exhibition and demonstrate that the term 'left' would not be off-putting and would, in fact, be very appealing in many case.**
- 16.** The question: Can you think of a better title? resulted in some useful suggestions that we should consider using. I have picked out several titles here that I recommend we consider using. However, there are many more in the Appendix that you may want to consider.

The top 5 titles I consider the most effective and the most reflective of the content are:

- 1). Art Turns Left** (as it involves the key terms 'art' and 'left' but in a snappy way)
- 2). From Out of Left Field** (as it also hints that the work will be radical as opposed to dull or dour)
- 3). The Common Good** (It doesn't have the word left in but clearly indicates the values of equality and collectivism – it could sound a bit worthy though)
- 4). Left of Centre** (as this can also mean creative thinking)
- 5). Left Shift** (As it indicates a movement to the left and a transformative affect)

Other Effective Suggestions for Possible Subtitles:

- 1). How the Left Re-imagined Art** (an effective short and simple subtitle that is perhaps more dynamic than the ones we have already suggested)
- 2). From Avant-garde to Anarchy** (could also work very well as a subtitle if the word left was in the main title)

DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF RESULTS FROM TATE TITLE SURVEY

Question 1: We would like your opinion on an exhibition to be held at Tate Liverpool over the coming year. Tate Liverpool is considering a number of titles for this exhibition which is subtitled: *How the left has changed art from the French revolution to today*. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all appealing and 10 is very appealing, how appealing do you find the following titles?

And:

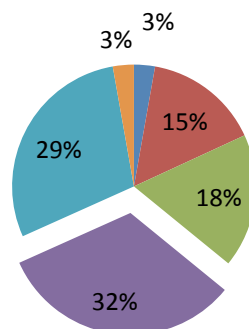
Question 5: Based on the description, how effectively do you think the following titles reflect the content of the exhibition?

i. Believe/Make/Share:

The mean (average) score for Question 1 (How appealing do you find the exhibition title?) for Believe/Make/Share is **3.6** which is a significantly lower rating than for the exhibition overall at **7.4**. This indicates that this title would not be an effective choice in terms of attracting people to the exhibition and therefore should not be the title for the show. Only **4%** of people gave this title either a 10 or 9 score to indicate it was very appealing, whereas **43%** of people rated it at 1 or 2 to indicate it was very unappealing. This indicates that people would effectively be put off by the exhibition if we gave it this title. There were few average scores indicating this was a 'love it or hate it' kind of title but with evidently the majority hating it.

The results for Question 5 (How effective do you find the exhibition title?) were even lower for Believe/Make/Share. Only **3%** of people thought that the title very effectively reflected the exhibition, and only **18%** thought it was either 'very' or 'quite' effectively, which was the lowest result of all of the titles. The vast majority, **61%**, thought that the title either 'not very' or 'not at all' effectively represented the exhibition. See Appendix 1 for the full breakdown of results.

■ Very effectively
■ Quite effectively
■ Neither
■ Not very effectively
■ Not at all effectively
■ Can't say/ don't know



The individual comments about titles indicated that this was specifically unappealing as it was too generic, utopic, and fantastical. The people who had expressed that the exhibition might be too worthy tended to rate this as the lowest out of the titles which also indicates it had an off-putting worthy air. There were no specific positive comments about this title.

These results conclusively prove that we should not use this, or a similar title, for the exhibition as it would be both unappealing and misleading.

Specific Comments

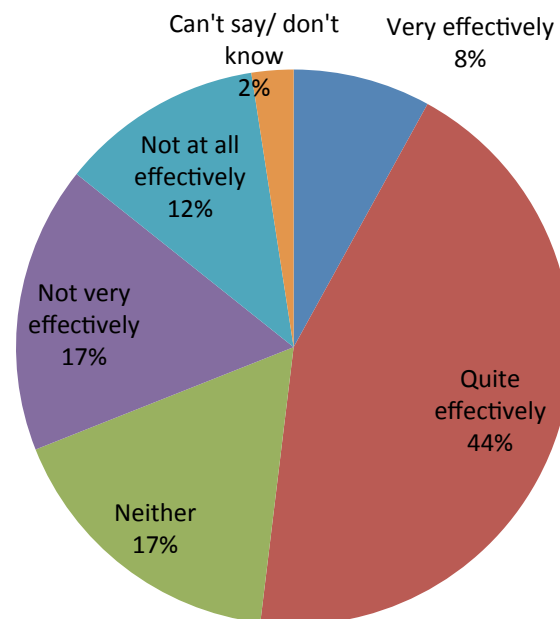
- The other 2 (believe/make/share and Changing Making: Making Change) **very generic**
- Believe, make, share suggests **fantasy or fairytale** type of interactive experience. Cause and Effect suggest a more scientific or perhaps historical type of event.
- 'Believe/Make/Share' will get twisted to the **'Make-believe show'**.
- The ways socialist/ libertarian philosophies have affected both the content/subject matter and the production processes of art objects. **The first title perhaps expresses this most clearly but is very 'clunky'.**

ii. **Changing Making/Making Change:**

The mean (average) score for Changing Making: Making Change is **5.0**, which is the third highest mean rating overall. However, it is still a significantly lower rating than for the exhibition overall at **7.3**. This indicates that this title would not be an effective choice in terms of attracting people to the exhibition and therefore should not be the title for the show. **5%**, gave the title a 10 rating to indicate that it was very appealing and only **8%** of people gave this title a 9, leaving a total for 10 and 9 slightly higher than Believe/Make/Share at **8%**. However, significantly less people, **23%** rated it at 1 or 2 to indicate it was very unappealing. The distribution of results was much more regular than Believe/Make/Share with the result wavering between 25-50 for each number apart from 10 most appealing which had 0. 3 and 7 were the most popular scores. These very average ratings indicates that less people would be actively effectively be put off by the exhibition if we gave it this title but that it would be unlikely to influence people to actually go.

The answers to question 5 about how effectively the title reflected the exhibition concept mirrored the scores for question 1. Only **8%** of people thought that the title 'very effectively' reflected the concept, which was not significantly higher than the results of Believe/Make/Share, but a small majority, **52%** of people, felt that the title was either 'very' or 'quite' effectively reflected the concept which was twice as high, although, this was

still not as high as the result for 'Left March'. As the pie chart above demonstrates, the large majority of people thought it was 'quite effective'. Please see Appendix 1 for a full breakdown of the results.



Furthermore the individual comments about this title, detailed below, indicate that it misled people to think it was about change in general or how art could achieve political change rather than about how politics had influenced art to change, even with the subtitle. There were no specific positive comments about this title.

In conclusion, I would not recommend this title for the exhibition as, although it would not put people off the exhibition, it was not significantly well liked to actually attract people to the exhibition. The scores indicate that it would have a relatively neutralising effect. However, the added issue is that the individual comments about this title indicate that people misunderstood the concept of the exhibition from the title.

Specific Comments

- The other 2 (believe/make/share and Changing Making: Making Change) very generic
- Changing making, making change sounds like it could be about the cultural or technological changes over the past century.
- 'Changing Making/Making Change' sounds like an airport business book.
- Nothing. Although if it ends up being called 'Changing Making, Making Change' it would lose its appeal slightly!

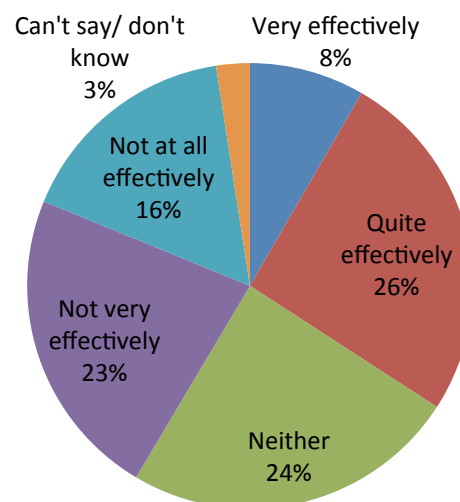
iii. Cause and Effect:

The mean (average) score for how appealing the title is for Cause and Effect is **5.5**, which is the **highest mean rating** overall. However, it is still a significantly lower rating than for the exhibition overall at **7.3**. This indicates

that this title would be a better choice but would still not be an effective choice in terms of attracting people to the exhibition and therefore should not be the title for the show.

The results were generally more positive than the previous two titles, **9%**, gave the title a 10 rating to indicate that it was very appealing and **6%** of people gave this title a 9, giving the highest total for 10 and 9 at **15%**. However, this still compares very unfavourably to the **34%** of people who gave the exhibition as a whole a 10 or 9 rating. Again, significantly less people, **17%** rated it at 1 or 2 to indicate it was very unappealing. Again the distribution of results was much more regular than Believe/Make/Share with the most common ratings being between 5 and 8. These high average ratings indicate that less people would be actively put off by the exhibition if we gave it this title, but that it was still not strong enough to actively influence people to actually go. The individual comments about this title demonstrate that some people thought it was of a scientific theme. There were no specific positive comments about this title.

The answers to question 5, about how effectively the title reflected the exhibition concept, mirrored the scores for question 1 and were similar to the results for Changing Making/ Making Change, but slightly lower. Again, only **8%** of people thought that the title 'very effectively' reflected the concept, which was not significantly higher than the results of Believe/Make/Share, but **34%** of people, felt that the title either 'very' or 'quite' effectively reflected the concept which was higher than Believe/Make/Share but significantly lower than both 'changing making/ making change' and 'Left March'. As the pie chart below demonstrates, the most popular scores were for the most neutral ratings 'quite', 'not very' and 'neither'.



In conclusion, I would not recommend this title for the exhibition, as although it is most appealing, it is not appealing enough and does not very effectively represent the content of the exhibition. The title is not as appealing as the exhibition overall and therefore should not be used. The qualitative data also revealed that that some people thought that the exhibition would be on a science related theme.

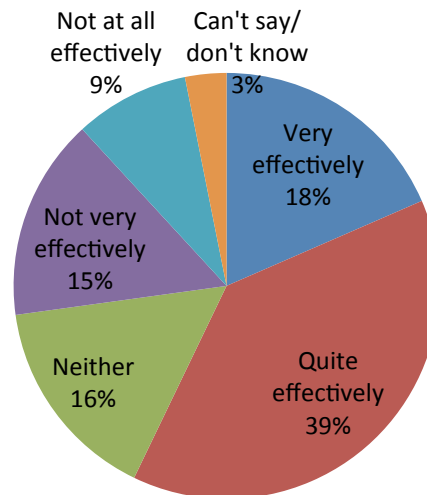
Specific Comments:

- "cause and effect" is very vague.
- Cause and Effect suggest a more scientific or perhaps historical type of event.
- Cause and effect could relate to scientific/chemical/metaphysical subjects so it could easily be mistaken for a science exhibition.
- 'Left March' and 'Cause and Effect' both manage to be dull and twee.

iv. **Left March:**

The first set of results gave this title a mean (average) score for question one, regarding how appealing the exhibition is of **2.58**, which is the lowest mean rating overall and a significantly lower rating than for the exhibition overall at **7.3**. Most noticeably there was not a single rating over six by any respondent and only one at 6. This gave the lowest possible score for the ratings 10 + 9 of **0%** indicating that nobody found the title very appealing and a very high score of **52%** for ratings 1 & 2 indicate that the vast majority of people found the title very unappealing. **However, these results demonstrated to me that there was a serious error in the process of data gathering.** The results of the qualitative data also seemed to very much contradict the quantitative data. Several participants when asked to think of a better title stated that Left March was the best title. However, their numerical scorings did not reflect this preference at all and in fact contradict this. Furthermore, Left March was the only title of those offered to be positively mentioned at all in response to the question about better titles. This indicated that it is highly unlikely that out of 288 there would be no scores at all of over 6 in the ratings. There was also an extremely high number of 2 ratings with 44% of all respondents scoring the title 2 out of 10, this seemed to me statistically highly improbable, especially when comparing this to the results from the other titles and from other exhibitions in general. I therefore asked that the results be rechecked with the market research company who conducted the survey. In response to this it was confirmed that these first results for Left March were in fact inaccurate, as there had been a coding error. I will therefore present the new results below.

The second amended set of results gave this title a mean (average) score for question one, regarding how appealing the exhibition is of **5.1**, which was the second highest mean rating overall but still had a significantly lower rating than for the exhibition overall at **7.3**. This title also had the second highest score for the ratings 10 + 9 of **14%** and **25%** for ratings 10 + 9 + 8, which indicates that around one quarter of respondents found the title very appealing. However, around a quarter of all respondents also found this title very unappealing, with a score of **27%** for ratings 1 & 2 or very unappealing, which indicates that it could also be off-putting.



Although 'Left March' is only considered the second most appealing exhibition it is considered the most effective title, in terms of how it reflects the exhibition concept. Left March had significantly higher results than all other titles for the rating of 'very effectively' representing the exhibition concept at **18%**. This score was over **10%** higher than both 'Cause and Effect' and 'Changing Making/ Making Change'. It also had the highest combined rating for 'very' and 'quite' effectively of **57%**, which indicates that the majority of people found the exhibition title to be reflective of the concept.

The qualitative data for 'Left March' indicates that it would be an appealing, as well as an effective title and that it would actually persuade some people to come to the exhibition who might not otherwise have been interested. However, it also seems like this title, with its militant associations, could potentially put some people off, although this tended to be people who were not interested in the exhibition concept as a whole. Furthermore, from analysing the negative comments about the title it is clear that it is not the word 'left' which is off-putting but the military connotations of the word 'march'.

Specific Comments about Left March:

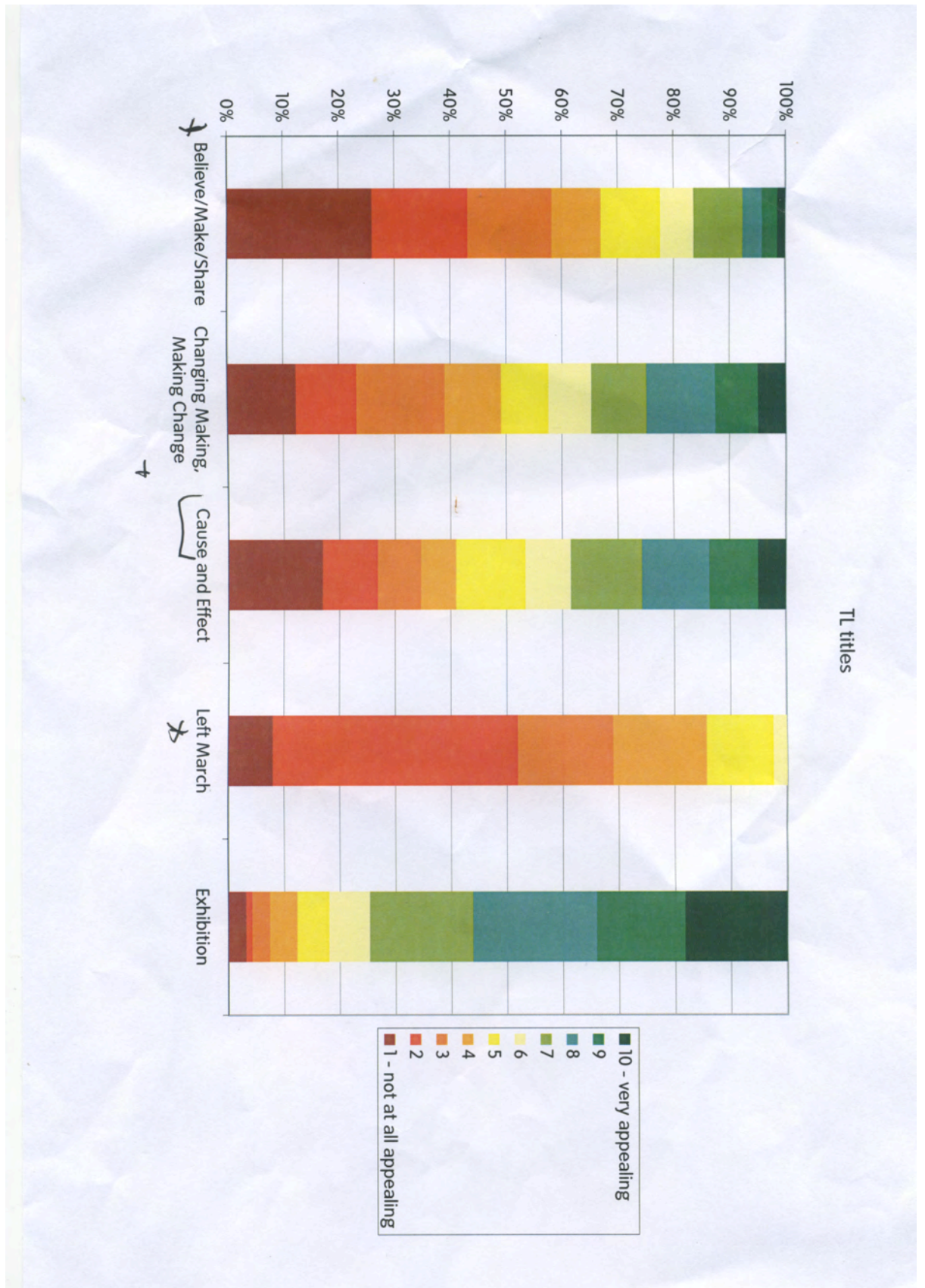
- 135. (H) 'I really like Left March!' but gave the title a 4 as a rating as opposed to 10 for Cause and Effect.
- 141. (H) 'No, Left March is good' but gave the title a 5 as a rating as opposed to 7 for Cause and Effect.
- 172. (E) 'I think Left March is the most satisfactory of those you have suggested' but rated it as 4 as opposed to 7 for Cause and Effect.
- 183. (H) 'The Point Is to Change It: The Left March in Art and Politics, 1789-2012' Suggested that Left March should be employed in the title but rated it 2 as opposed to 9 for Cause and Effect.
- 199. (J) 'In 3 cases I find them so hard to make sense of that I wouldn't look to find out more. For some reason I found 'Left March' intriguing enough that I **WOULD want to find out more.**' However this person gave Left March a 4 as a rating and Cause and Effect a 7.
- 206. (E) 'I thought the info said that it was about how the Left had changed art. If I hadn't read that, I don't think I would have any idea what the exhibition was about from the titles! I think Cause and Effect would make me think it was about science and the ones about Believe and Making change would be more to do with people making things happen. **Left March would indicate to me it was about the Left.**' They gave the exhibition a 10 rating overall for its appeal but only gave Left March a rating of 2 as opposed to 10 for Cause and Effect.
- 93. 'The 2 I have clicked on as a 10 sounds interesting even without knowing the content, if I knew the content I might get the wrong impression and not go. Not knowing means I would attend. The other 2 headings mean nothing and would do my head in, so I would not go' the participant is however not recorded in the quantitative data as giving any title a ten rating. They gave Left March and Cause and Effect 1 as a rating. Either they misunderstood the rating system or something has gone wrong with the data collection.

Negative comments about Left March:

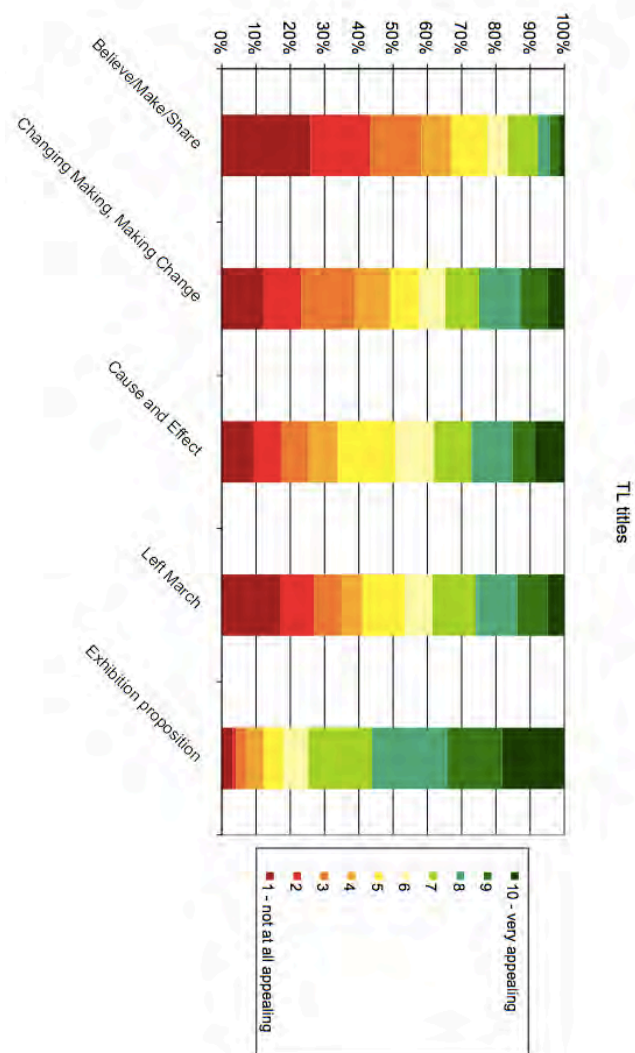
- **Something short like 'Left March' but unfortunately that sounds like it is going to be a military exhibition.**
- 'Left March is **slightly patriotic**'.
- 'Left March' and 'Cause and Effect' both manage to be **dull** and twee.
- Left march suggests **something to do with war**, or **left leaning militisism**.

Overall Conclusions: The results demonstrate that none of the titles are particular appealing and that Believe/Make/Share is actively off-putting. They compare negatively with the overall appeal of the exhibition, which is high, and therefore none of these titles should therefore be used. See the graph below to compare the appeal of the exhibition as compared to the title. The results show that the most appealing title are 'Cause and effect' and 'Left March' and that the title that most accurately conveys the exhibition concept is 'Left March'. The qualitative results also demonstrate that this title was appealing as it was clear and direct but that the

military connotations of the word 'March' were off-putting. I would therefore recommend using a clear and direct title like 'Left March' but avoiding words associated with militancy and dogma.



First results for 'how appealing?' ratings of exhibition titles



Ammended results for 'how appealing?' ratings of exhibition titles

Question 2: Based on the titles suggested, what do you think the exhibition is about:

The majority of people understood that the general theme of the exhibition was about the relationship between art and politics from the titles we suggested together with the subtitle. **73%** of people demonstrated in their response to the question that they understood this central theme. Only **9%** of people stated that they did not understand what the exhibition was about, whereas **23%** of people demonstrated an excellent understanding and a further **21%** of understood, at the very least, that it was about the influence of left-wing politics or socialism on art. Roughly **48%** of people misunderstood some element of the exhibition.

However, several people highlighted that they only understood what the exhibition was about from the subtitle and that the main titles were meaningless. For example: 'How the rise and fall of socialism from its roots has affected the production and reception of art at an international level (would expect a large proportion to be on Soviet Union, China and Cuba) - must admit this is mostly based on the subtitle' demonstrates an excellent understanding of what the exhibition is about but that this came from the subtitle as opposed to the titles.

A common reason for not understanding what the exhibition was about from the titles was that people thought it was just about change in general and not about the way the left had changed art – I think this is likely to be because of the inclusion of the title 'Changing Making: Making Change' which was very generic and people didn't pick up the political theme from this. 37 of the 288 respondents or **13%** of people misunderstood this.

Another common misconception was that it was about how art had influenced politics or leftist politics rather than about how leftist politics had changed art. About **8%** of all respondents had misunderstood this from the titles. This aspect, which is the reversal of the usual position of exhibitions of political art, is the unique selling point of the exhibition so it is very important we get this across.

A high number of people had misunderstood the reference to the French Revolution (How the left changed art from the French Revolution to today) in the subtitle to mean that the exhibition was *only* about French art. Approximately **8%** of all respondents had misunderstood this from the subtitle. We should therefore drop this reference from the subtitle so as not to mislead people. I would recommend changing the subtitle to 'how left wing values changed the way that art is made and done' or 'how the left changed the way that art is made and done'.

The vast majority of people did not pick up on the fact that this is about how art is 'made' or that it is concentrating on how things are produced, displayed and disseminated rather than the content and subject-matter of art works. Only 3 out of 288 respondents (**1%**) understood this from the titles. There is nothing in the

titles or the subtitles other than the first part of the 'changing making: making changes' title that would indicate this aspect of the exhibition so these results are not surprising. This is the other unique selling point of the exhibition so it is important to get this across in the title or at least the subtitle. Again I would recommend changing the subtitle to 'how left wing values changed the way that art is made and done' or something similar.

The most common complaints about the title were that they were too vague and generic (see comments below). This would indicate that more specific titles e.g. a title with the word 'left' in it, that more accurately reflect the exhibition concept would also be more appealing to people and result in a higher number of visitors.

Comments about titles in general:

- 206. 'I thought the info said that it was about how the Left had changed art. If I hadn't read that, I don't think I would have any idea what the exhibition was about from the titles!' Left March would indicate to me it was about the Left.
- 157. Left march suggests something to do with war, or left leaning militicism. Believe, make, share suggests fantasy or fairytale type of interactive experience. Cause and Effect suggest a more scientific or perhaps historical type of event. Changing making, making change sounds like it could be about the cultural or technological changes over the past century.
- 55. Quite clearly about change in a basic sense, yet none of the titles give recognition of what the art exhibition will consist of, very brief and non explanatory. The real hook is absent since the titles would leave just as much misinformed viewers as they would perhaps curious and intrigued viewers. Cause and effect could relate to scientific/chemical/metaphysical subjects so it could easily be mistaken for a science exhibition.
- 147. I would want something less academic - "cause and effect" is very vague, "left march" slightly patriotic and the other 2 very generic.
- Nothing. Although if it ends up being called 'Changing Making, Making Change' it would lose its appeal slightly!
- 199. I find the 4 suggested titles in the question quite incomprehensible, & couldn't guess. From the proposed title, I would assume it's about the influence of socialist ideas in art.
- 241. I wouldn't know without the subtitle.
- 246. How the rise and fall of socialism from its roots has affected the production and reception of art at an international level (would expect a large proportion to be on Soviet Union, China and Cuba) - must admit this is mostly based on the subtitle.
- 253. If combined with the sub-title: How art was used as a political tool to effect change If used alone: a collaborative approach to art
- 263. The subtitle gives what seems to be a fairly factual description - some of the titles imply that the left changes art deliberately for political motives, others that this was a side effect.
- 272. Titles are way too generic - can't imagine at all what it's about.

- 36. Not sure - titles give nothing away which is why it's not very appealing.
- 42. Absolutely no idea. You refer to 'the left' and this is the only title that incorporates the word.
- 93. The 2 I have clicked on as a 10 sounds interesting even without knowing the content, if I knew the content I might get the wrong impression and not go. Not knowing means I would attend. The other 2 headings mean nothing and would do my head in, so I would not go

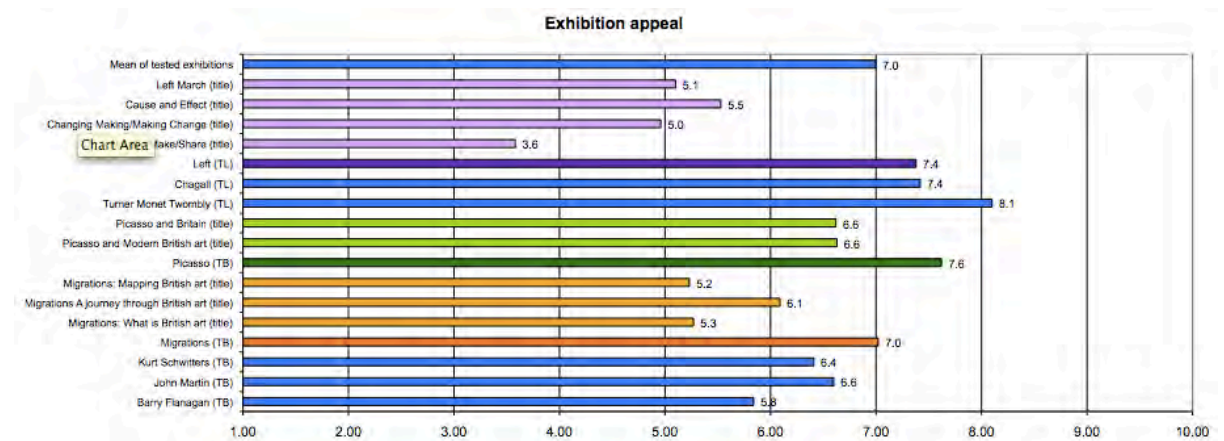
Question 3: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all appealing and 10 is very appealing; how appealing do you find the exhibition?

The participants were given the following description of the exhibition to base their decision upon:

“How the left has changed art from the French revolution to today, examines how the production and reception of art has been influenced by left-wing values. Displaying works from 1700s to the present day ranging from paintings to posters to participatory art, the exhibition demonstrates how political principles led artists across the globe to actively change the processes used to make, display and disseminate their work. Each section of this thematic display will demonstrate how key values of the left, such as collectivism, equality and the search for alternative economies have influenced art-making and reception. Featured artists include William Morris, Paul Signac, Kasimir Malevich, Komar and Melamid, Karel Appel and the Guerilla Girls.”

The results of this section are extremely encouraging. As the graph below indicates the mean score for the exhibition was **7.4** which compares very favourably with the summer blockbuster exhibitions like *Chagall*, *Picasso* and *Turner*, *Monet*, *Twombly* and is significantly higher than those for major exhibitions like *Barry Flanagan*, *John Martin*, *Kurt Schwitters* at Tate Britain. It is also a higher score than the most comparable exhibition listed *Migrations* at Tate Britain. However, when looking at the results for the ratings of 10 & 9 together at **34%** and 10 & 9 & 8 together at **56%** which indicate that the respondents find the exhibition very appealing the results are even more encouraging. These results are actually higher than *Chagall* and significantly higher than all exhibitions at Tate Britain other than *Picasso*, at **10%** higher than *Migrations* and a huge **31%** higher than *Barry Flanagan*.

This indicates that with the right title and the right marketing campaign the exhibition could be extremely successful and attract a large number of people. As the titles perform so significantly worse than the exhibition concept it demonstrates how crucial it is to get the title right and most importantly how important it is to accurately reflect the content of the exhibition.



Question 4: What does the term 'left' mean to you?

An overwhelming majority of respondents, **95%**, understood the term in its political meaning, associating the word with left-wing politics or more specifically ideologies socialism, communism and rarely with specific political parties e.g. Labour (old Labour). Of these **33%** defined the left according to the specific values the exhibition is based around e.g. collectivism, equality, alternative economies and social progress. This is encouraging as it indicates that the majority of people will understand the relationship between the left and these specific values. Only **3%** understood the term more generally as a either a direction or simply the opposite to right, or to be left-behind or abandoned. Only **2%** did not understand the term or did not comment.

Results:

Stated that they didn't understand = 3 = **1%**

Didn't associate the term with a political meaning = 7 = **3%**

Understood the term as political (socialist/communist etc) = 178 = **62%**

understood the term as political (socialist/communist etc) and associated it with the values (collectivism, equality, social progress and the search for alternative economies) that the exhibition is based around. = 94 = **33%**

These results indicate that we should not worry about people misunderstanding the term 'left' in the title as it immediately has political resonance with people.

Question 5: Based on the description, how effectively do you think the following titles reflect the content of the exhibition?

Please see the result for section 1 which also contains the charts for Question 5 in order to make the results clearer.

Question 6: Can you suggest a better title for the exhibition?

The majority of respondents, **61%**, suggested titles which included the word left, such as Left-Leaning, Look Left and simply Left, or Art on the Left, which suggests that the majority of people are not put off by the term 'left' and would rather that the title of the exhibition actively reflected the concept. Other popular terms

included the word 'red', 'forward', 'seeing', 'people', 'eye', 'looking', 'change' and 'socialism'. Titles suggested several times included variations of 'Art on the Left' or 'Left Art', 'Left Turn' or 'Art Turns Left', 'Left-Field' or 'Out of Left-Field', 'Seeing Red', 'Left of Centre', 'Art for the People', 'How the Left was Won', 'Moving Left', 'Power to the People', 'Leftism' or 'Leftisms', 'Keep Left' and 'Art and Revolution'. Please see Appendix 2 for the full list of possible titles, with the most interesting titles highlighted.

The top 12 titles I consider the most effective and the most reflective of the content are:

- 1). Art Turns Left** (as it involves the key terms 'art' and 'left' but in a snappy way)
- 2). From Out of Left Field** (as it also hints that the work will be radical as opposed to dull or dour)
- 3). The Common Good** (It doesn't have the word left in but clearly indicates the values of equality and collectivism – it could sound a bit worthy though)
- 4). Left of Centre** (as this can also mean creative thinking)
- 5). Left-isms** (As it acknowledges that there is more than one type of socialism or leftist ideology and also that 'isms' are another name for art movements).
- 6). Comrades in Arts** (pun on comrades in arms – doesn't mention the word left but gets across the idea of collectivity etc.)
- 7). Left Shift** (As it indicates a movement to the left and a transformative affect)
- 8). The Leftist Mark: From Morris to Malevich** (I like the title and the reference to mark-making/mark as influence and also the idea of having artist in the subtitle, which could indicate the range of artists, not chronologically but by picking the two most aesthetically different artists. Could be the 'Left Makes its Mark' or something similar)
- 9). Drawn to the Left** (Could mean 'drawn' as in attraction, but hints at the art connection)
- 10). The Left Hand Drives** (indicates that art pushed the left forward – i think this might not be very clear without the subtitle though).
- 11). Art on the Left:** (Has the advantage of being simple and clear, but possibly a little dull sounding.
- 12). From Avant-Garde to Anarchy** (Doesn't contain the word left, but sounds dynamic and reflects the fact that the idea of an 'avant-garde' was conceived by the Utopian Socialist – Saint-Simon.

Other Effective Suggestions for Possible Subtitles:

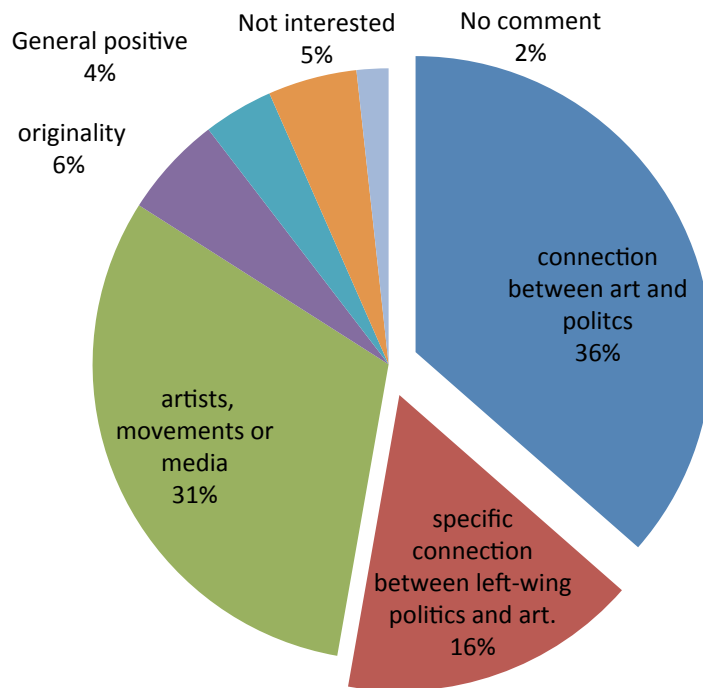
- 1). How the Left Re-imagined Art** (an effective short and simple subtitle that is perhaps more dynamic than the ones we have already suggested)
- 2). From Avant-garde to Anarchy** (could also work very well as a subtitle if the word left was in the main title)

Question 7a: What appeals to you about the exhibition?

The results of this section demonstrate that the most appealing aspect of the exhibition is the subject, the relationship between art and politics. The number of respondents that highlight this political aspect of the exhibition as the most appealing part is an emphatic **52%** of all respondents, of this total, **31%** found it

appealing as it concentrated specifically on left-wing politics. In addition to this **6%** found the exhibition concept to be particularly appealing for its originality, giving the subject-matter/ concept of the exhibition a total of **58%** of reasons offered for why the exhibition is appealing. There are many extremely positive comments about the subject-matter that indicate it would inspire people to visit the exhibition, for example 'the content: I'm interested in what the influence of the left might have been (I've been meaning to come up to Liverpool to visit the galleries for a couple of years, & when I read what this exhibition would be about, i thought, maybe this is the thing that reminds me to go!)'. The comments also demonstrate that many people are self-identifying on a personal and political level with the theme of the exhibition and it is this factor that appeals to them the most. There are several comments in answer to the question that declare that the respondent finds it appealing as they are: 'a socialist' 'left-wing' or 'working class'. For example: 'Being a believer in left wing values and also interested in art it sounds very interesting' and 'I think the theme is a very interesting one and I am on the left so would be intrigued to see what art is included and why' or simply because 'I am a socialist'.

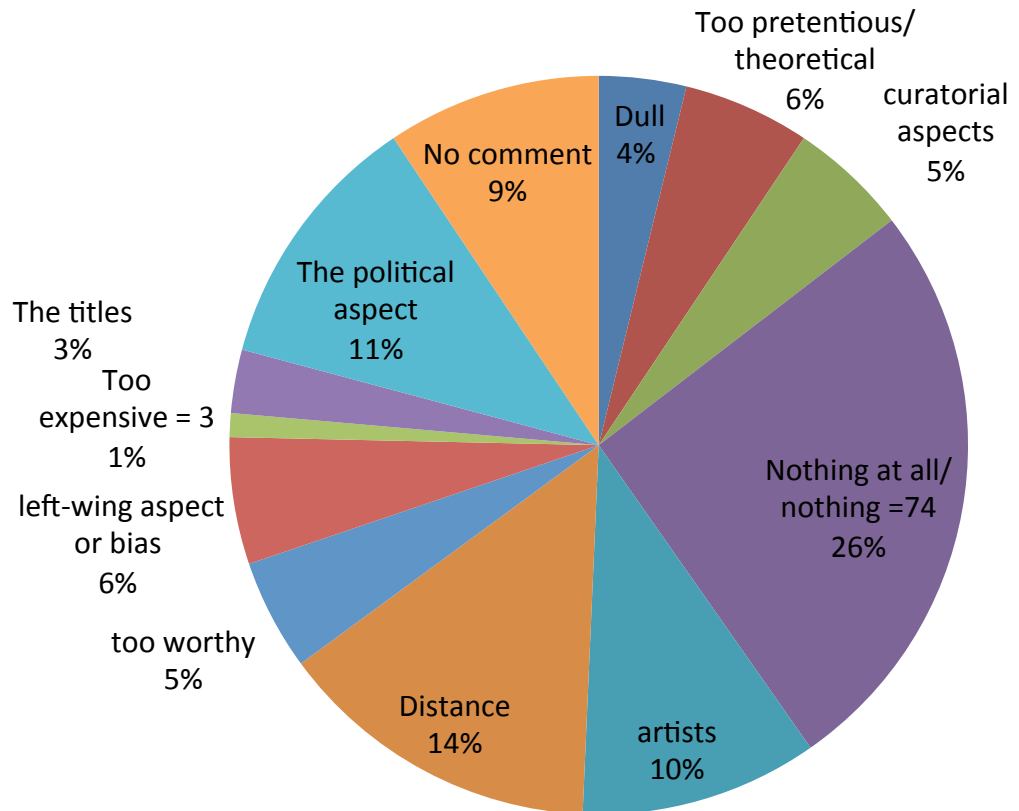
31% of respondents cited either the broad range of artists on offer or the specific artists, artworks or movements that would likely be covered by the show, as the most appealing aspect. William Morris is clearly the most appealing artist of those mentioned for those interested in the subject, having been mentioned specifically 9 times, but Malevich and Komar and Melamid were also mentioned, along with the Situationist and Arts and Crafts Movement. Having some less familiar artists is also considered a positive in some cases, with many respondents stating that they are particularly keen to see artists that they have not seen before.



In conclusion, these results demonstrate that the political aspect of the exhibition is what is most appealing, and that the left-wing focus of this is what particularly resonates with many people. This indicates that we should select a title that does not shy away from these aspects and clearly demonstrates what the subject of the exhibition is, otherwise we will risk losing a lot of potential visitors to the exhibition. Some comments specifically mention that it is the clarity of the political angle that is appealing to them. For example, 'the clear foregrounding of the political dimension' and 'bearing in mind that 'socialism' seems to have become a swear word in media political discourse it is refreshing that this essential relationship (between art and the left) is being brought back out into the open'. However, it is also important to note that a high percentage of people were also specifically drawn to the range of art and artists mentioned and we therefore need to also ensure that this aspect is also represented in the title. I would therefore recommend choosing a clear and direct title that foreground the political dimension but also indicates the range of artists on offer and the diversity of approaches. As many people have specifically mentioned William Morris and also highlighted the Arts and Crafts Movement as an appealing factor we should also consider using the work and name of William Morris in the promotional material. What is particularly encouraging to see from the comments, is that people have really demonstrated that they have a good understanding, after reading the description, that the exhibition is about the influence of left-wing political values on the way that artists make and do their work. Several people have also mentioned that they would like to learn from the exhibition and that they would hope that the layout is clear and the information informative to allow them to do

this. This suggests people would welcome some textual information to help them understand the connection between left-wing politics and art.

Question 7b: What puts you off the exhibition?



Encouragingly 26% of respondents stated specifically that they found nothing to be off-putting about the exhibition, with a further 9% not making any comment. The other results demonstrate that the political subject matter, the concentration on left-wing politics, or the possibility of political bias, are not significantly off-putting. Only 11% of respondents specifically mentioned the political aspect or the subject-matter of the exhibition as being off-putting, compared to 52% of people who found it to be appealing. It is worth pointing out that there were several respondents who listed as both appealing and off-putting depending on how it is handled. Only 6% of people found the specific left-wing focus of the exhibition, or the possibility of political bias or one-sidedness to be off-putting. It should be noted that out of these respondents approximately half stated that they would still probably, or definitely visit the exhibition, indicating that they were just expressing a concern that it will be too dogmatic. This indicates that we should not be too worried about foregrounding the left-wing focus of the exhibition as it more likely

to be appealing than unappealing. However, we should take care to ensure we acknowledge the political impact of the right on art in the exhibition space and be clear that it is not only the left that has had an impact on art.

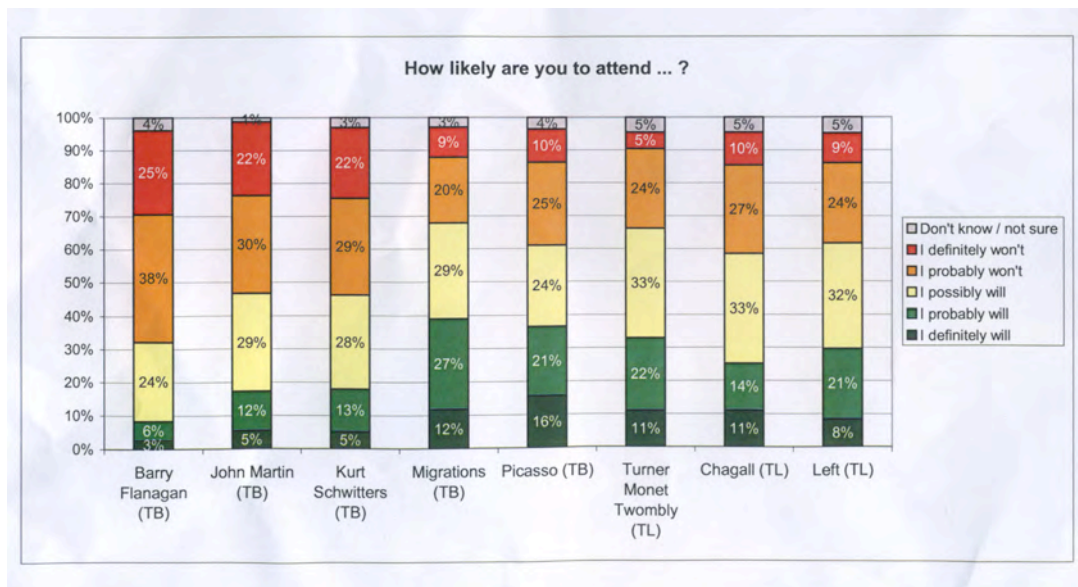
10% of all respondents stated that either they did not know some of the artists, or that they did not know what kind of art to expect as potentially off-putting. Other specific comments expressed concern that there might not be enough representation from outside Western Europe and the US, from black artists or from female artists. It will therefore be important to give an indication of the variety of art on offer in the texts, information and images we issue about the exhibition and to also consider seriously how representative the exhibition is, particularly when it has an emphasis on Equality.

Other common responses were concerns that the exhibition might be too dull (**4%**) or humourless, too worthy (**5%**), or too pretentious (**6%**). I firmly believe the artworks in the exhibition will contradict these ideas, so it is therefore worth considering using promotional images, examples of artists that counteract these ideas. For example, the humour of Komar and Melamid or *Live and Let Die*, the vibrancy of the Signac work and the OSPAAAL posters, or the lack of pretence in the work of William Morris or the Taller de Grafica Popular for example.

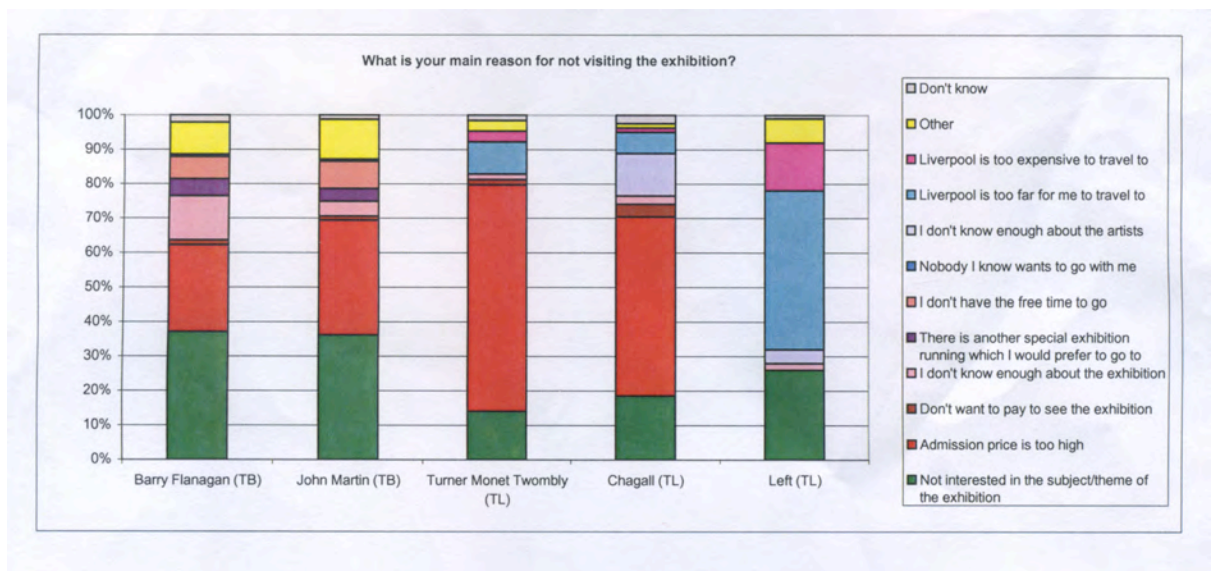
The other off-putting factors were of a practical nature such as the distance to, or location of, the exhibition and the entrance price. It should be noted that it was not specified that there was a charge for the exhibition and that judging by previous responses to exhibitions at Tate Liverpool (TMT and Chagall) this is the most off-putting factor for people in general, and is likely to severely limit the amount of people that will attend. It therefore, might be worth considering the idea of operating alternative pricing systems for significant dates during the exhibition, in recognition of the alternative economies section of the exhibition.

Question 8: How likely are you to attend the exhibition?

As the graph below demonstrates, the results for how likely people are to attend the exhibition are also very encouraging. The exhibition compares very well to the blockbuster summer exhibitions at Tate Liverpool, *Chagall*, and *Turner, Monet, Twombly* and performs significantly better than the monographic shows at Tate Britain.



Of the respondents who stated that they 'probably' or 'definitely' wouldn't come, the majority stated that the reasons for their lack of attendance were either the distance or expensive of travel to Liverpool. It therefore might be worth considering working with train operators/transport operators to see if it is possible to work out a deal with reduced fares to visit the exhibition.



Detailed Results

Question 1: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all appealing and 10 is very appealing, how appealing do you find the following titles?

AND

Question 5: Based on the description, how effectively do you think the following titles reflect the content of the exhibition?

i. Believe/Make/Share

Results of Question 1:

No. Of 10's = 4 = 1%
 No. Of 9's = 8 = 3%
 No. Of 8's 13 = 5%
 No. Of 3's = 43 = 15%
 No. Of 2's = 49 = 17%
 No. Of 1's = 74 = 26%

No. Of 10 + 9 = 4%

No. Of 1 + 2 = 43%

Results of Question 5:

| How effective do you think this exhibition title is... Believe/Make/Share | Total | Visit history | | |
|---|-------|---------------|--------|------------|
| | | Current | Lapsed | Never been |
| Base | 287 | 67 | 111 | 108 |
| Very effectively | 3% | 1% | 5% | 2% |
| Quite effectively | 15% | 6% | 17% | 19% |
| Neither | 18% | 12% | 20% | 19% |
| Not very effectively | 32% | 37% | 32% | 31% |
| Not at all effectively | 29% | 42% | 27% | 23% |
| Can't say/ don't know | 3% | 1% | - | 6% |
| No reply | - | - | - | - |

| How effective do you think this exhibition title is... Believe/Make/Share | Total | Visit history | | |
|---|-------|---------------|--------|------------|
| | | Current | Lapsed | Never been |
| Base | 287 | 67 | 111 | 108 |
| Very/ quite effectively | 18% | 7% | 22% | 21% |
| Neither | 18% | 12% | 20% | 19% |

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Not very/ not at all effectively | 61% | 79% | 59% | 54% |
| Can't say/ don't know | 3% | 1% | - | 6% |

ii. **Changing Making/Making Change:**

Results of Question 1:

No. Of 10's = 0 = 0%

No. Of 9's = 22 = 8%

No. Of 8's = 35 = 13%

No. Of 3's = 31 = 11%

No. Of 2's = 35 = 13%

No. Of 1's = 35 = 13%

No. Of 10 + 9 = 8%

No. Of 1 + 2 = 26%

Results of Question 5:

| How effective do you think this exhibition title is... Changing Making, Making Change | Total | Visit history | | |
|---|-------|---------------|--------|------------|
| | | Current | Lapsed | Never been |
| Base | 287 | 67 | 111 | 108 |
| Very effectively | 8% | 4% | 13% | 6% |
| Quite effectively | 44% | 48% | 42% | 44% |
| Neither | 17% | 10% | 21% | 18% |
| Not very effectively | 17% | 18% | 14% | 19% |
| Not at all effectively | 12% | 16% | 10% | 11% |
| Can't say/ don't know | 2% | 3% | - | 4% |
| No reply | - | - | - | - |

| How effective do you think this exhibition title is... Changing Making, Making Change | Total | Visit history | | |
|---|-------|---------------|--------|------------|
| | | Current | Lapsed | Never been |

| | Base | 287 | 67 | 111 | 108 |
|----------------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Very/ quite effectively | | 52% | 52% | 55% | 49% |
| Neither | | 17% | 10% | 21% | 18% |
| Not very/ not at all effectively | | 29% | 34% | 24% | 30% |
| Can't say/ don't know | | 2% | 3% | - | 4% |
| No reply | | - | - | - | - |

iii. **Cause and Effect:**

Results of Question 1:

No. Of 10's = 0 = 5%

No. Of 9's = 22 = 9%

No. Of 8's = 35 = 12%

No. Of 2's = 8%

No. Of 1's = 9%

No. Of 10 + 9 = 14%

No. Of 1 + 2 = 17%

Results of Question 5:

| How effective do you think this exhibition title is... Cause and Effect | Total | Visit history | | |
|---|-------|---------------|--------|------------|
| | | Current | Lapsed | Never been |
| Base | 287 | 67 | 111 | 108 |
| Very effectively | 8% | 9% | 9% | 7% |
| Quite effectively | 26% | 36% | 26% | 19% |
| Neither | 24% | 16% | 30% | 24% |
| Not very effectively | 23% | 19% | 22% | 26% |
| Not at all effectively | 16% | 18% | 14% | 19% |
| Can't say/ don't know | 2% | 1% | - | 5% |
| No reply | - | - | - | - |

| How effective do you think this exhibition title is... Cause and Effect | Total | Visit history | | |
|---|-------|---------------|--------|-------|
| | | Current | Lapsed | Never |

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|
| | | | | been |
| Base | 287 | 67 | 111 | 108 |
| Very/ quite effectively | 34% | 45% | 35% | 27% |
| Neither | 24% | 16% | 30% | 24% |
| Not very/ not at all effectively | 39% | 37% | 35% | 44% |
| Can't say/ don't know | 2% | 1% | - | 5% |
| No reply | - | - | - | - |

iv. Left March:

Results of Question 1:

No. Of 10's = 5%

No. Of 9's = 9%

No. Of 8's = 12%

No. Of 2's = 10%

No. Of 1's = 17%

No. Of 10 + 9 = 14%

No. Of 1 + 2 = 27%

Results of Question 5:

| How effective do you think this exhibition title is... Left March | Total | Visit history | | |
|---|-------|---------------|--------|------------|
| | | Current | Lapsed | Never been |
| Base | 287 | 67 | 111 | 108 |
| Very effectively | 18% | 22% | 18% | 17% |
| Quite effectively | 39% | 40% | 42% | 34% |
| Neither | 16% | 22% | 13% | 15% |
| Not very effectively | 15% | 7% | 17% | 19% |
| Not at all effectively | 9% | 6% | 8% | 11% |
| Can't say/ don't know | 3% | 1% | 2% | 5% |

| | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|
| No reply | - | - | - | - |
|----------|---|---|---|---|

| How effective do you think this exhibition title is... Left March | Total | Visit history | | |
|---|-------|---------------|--------|------------|
| | | Current | Lapsed | Never been |
| Base | 287 | 67 | 111 | 108 |
| Very/ quite effectively | 57% | 63% | 60% | 51% |
| Neither | 16% | 22% | 13% | 15% |
| Not very/ not at all effectively | 24% | 13% | 25% | 30% |
| Can't say/ don't know | 3% | 1% | 2% | 5% |
| No reply | - | - | - | - |

Question 6: Can you suggest a better title for the exhibition?

All Suggestions (Best suggestions highlighted):

Left foot forward x 1, Forward! X 1, Forward for change x 1, Forward to a better future x 1

The means of production

Art and the political left x1, Left Art x 3, **Art on the Left x 2**, Left-wing Art x 1, Leftist Art x 1, Left-wing x 1, Artists on the Left x 1, The Left and Art x 2, **Art and the Left** x 1 = 12

Art and socialism x 1, Socialism in art

Left Hand Creation

From avant garde to anarchy.

Left field 4 or **From Leftfield** x 1

Left turn 3, Left Turn Ahead x 1, When Art Turned Left x 1, **Art Turns Left** x 1

Seeing Red x 3

Blood on the Canvass - The Radical Challenge (good pun on political canvassing - we could think about Political Canvass or Canvassing for the Left or Left Canvass)

Left of centre x 3

Reflections from the Left

Art for the people x 4, The people's art x 1

Left wing politics and the development of art (more of a subtitle)

Against the Grain

Paint it red x 1, Red Paint x 1, Red Shift x 1, Red Squares x 1, Red is the Colour, A million shades of red x 1, Red Edge x 1, Red Dawn – Paintbrushes and Politics x 1 (How about 'Paint it Red, Paint it Black' to cover socialism, communism and anarchism)

Marxism

Left to Change

Influential left x 1, Influence from the left x 1, How the Left has Influenced Art x 1
Artistic values with left-wing influence x 1

Out of Left Field

How the left was won x 3 (pun on 'How the West was Won')

Swing to the left

Left Shift

The Leftist Mark on Art: Morris to Malevich

Sharing resource, valuing equality

Movements of the left, Moving Left x 1, Moving to the Left x 1, The Left on the Move x 1

Enter Stage Left

Power to the People x 2

Next Left x 2

Leftism x 2 or Leftisms x 1

Collective left

The Common Good

Left Leanings x 1 or Leaning Left x 1, Left leaning life x 1

The Changing Face of Art Since the French Revolution (more of a subtitle)

Peoplemakeartmakepeople

Artists & Politics x 1, Politics and Art x1

Revolting Consequences

Democratisation of Art - From the French Revolution to Kandinsky

Within the Torpedo

Eyes left x 1 or Eyes to the Left x 1 or A left-eye View x1, Viewed from the left x 1,

Eye-line x 1, Catching the Red-eye x 1

Comrades in arts (pun on Comrades in arms)

Road to the Left

Art in the making

Drawn to the left

Changing Art for Good

Radical Art x 1, A radical canvas

Left not right x 1, The Left Are Right x 1, Is the left right? X 1

Liberty, equality and egalite x 1, Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite x 1

Storming Cultural Barricades x 1, Painting the Barricades x 1

Beyond the Bastille

Look Left x 2, Looking Left x 2, Looking from the Left x 1, How Looking Left Changed Art x 1

Belief in Change x 1, Changes with meaning x 1, Art for change x 1, Social Art for Social Change (too similar to Art for Social Change)

Left incline

Keep Left x 2

The Point Is to Change It!

A matter of life on the left

From Right to Left

Art & Revolution X 2, Revolution x 1

Left!

Left Hand Side

Left-minded Makers

Tourner à gauche

Visions of a better world

Make it new

Let them eat cake

New Hope New Vision

left-art-ist, commun(art)ist, social(art)ist,

The Left Hand Drives

How the Left Re-imagined Art (Could be a better subtitle than our current one)

Left out - left in?

'Better Left Alone'

Lies of left wing propaganda and the art it damaged

Are all artists lefties?

Painting Politics

Not Right

Left! Left! Left!

Comments:

- Art for the people? (the question mark being part of the title. Does the title have to be so allusive? Would "Left wing politics and the development of art" be too pedestrian? I suppose it might not attract people of a right wing thinking but it has the benefit of saying what it does on the tin (to use a cliché).
- I think it needs to have the word art in it.
- (To first identify the earliest and latest artists in the exhibition as to them include them in the title itself.)- 'The Leftist Mark on Art: Morris to Malevich' (etc) OR 'Left Supremacy: Morris to Malevich' (etc)
- Socialism instead of left and a more political statement as politics always affects artists
- Something short like 'left march' but unfortunately that sounds like it is going to be a military exhibition. Left field, Next left....?
- I don't think I could make a decent stab at trying. I think being controversial is good. Like 'Change Stinks' 'Obesity for beginners' 'English Artists are superior to the French'
- Spell out the exhibition content clearly. the 'snappy' titles seem to me to be completely meaningless. The Democratisation of Art - From the French Revolution to Kandinsky'
- Within the Torpedo: ... To make link between left politics vanguard idea and art avant-garde - drawing on Kandinsky, Pyramid; Barr & MoMA as torpedo; Marxist-Leninist idea of revolutionary elite.
- I doubt it. Making Change is probably the best. My own suggestions might be more factual, but most likely less punchy.
- I really like 'Left March'!
- No, Left March is good
- Not really, but I would want something less academic - "cause and effect" is very vague, "left march" slightly patriotic and the other 2 very generic.
- Offhand, no. I think Left March is the most satisfactory of those you have suggested. Something like "Is (or was) the left right?" maybe.

- Not during a 5 minute survey, but suggest it **should try less to be descriptive and more to be provocative**, so that the accompanying descriptive paragraph might get read.
- Tossing it off, crappy commie art through the ages.
- You need something that links artists with their political beliefs so that people understand from the very beginning that its the relationship and influence that left politics has had on some artists.
- Trying to think of an uncorny pun that combines art and communist or socialist - something like commun(art)ist, social(art)ist, left-art-ist??

Question 7a: What appeals to you about the exhibition?

Individual Comments of Note:

- I like the tie in between the **socialist movement and art**
- This is an area that really interests me, i hope it includes examples of positive impact, **contemporary as well as historical examples** and space for **the situationists**
- **Clear foregrounding of political dimension**
- Being a **believer in left wing values** and also interested in art it sounds very interesting
- I love both **politics and art** so **I would definitely come and see this.**
- **I am a socialist.**
- Every movement, time should be explored whether you agree or not - I like to see things that challenge me and take the wider view.
- I don't know much about a number of the artists mentioned which intrigues me. I am a definite fan of **William Morris** so that helps too.
- Well, I enjoyed **Komar and Melamid's** music project...
- **Politically, I view myself as left of centre.** I would therefore like to learn more about how left-wing artists have responded to events and influenced art movements.
- The content seems really **interesting I feel I would both learn and confirm information.**
- **The left aspect**
- Group Exhibitions generally focus on themes, style and process, rather than ideas. This appears to add **a political dimension which is not generally seen.**
- It's an interesting connection, slightly at odds with the current consensus.
- The idea of **an exhibition which clearly demonstrates the gradual influence of the left on art and artists,** entertained by paintings, text and illustrations that work as a narrative telling device that viewers can move around the exhibition floor and graduate from one part of information to the next, **working like a storytelling experience** from one age to the next, old to contemporary, laid out in simple order. (Thus resulting in an easily digested and memorable experience).
- I am interested in politics and the **socialist principles affecting artists**

- History of socialist influence on art, range of artists, originality of the scope of the exhibition. Think it would be interesting to see.
- I'm interested in the mix of art and politics, in art as an agent/expression of social change. Also I'd welcome the opportunity to see some work by Malevich.
- Many of the artists mentioned are unknown to me so it will be interesting to see their work. I am also largely unaware of the influence of the Left on art.
- It's powerful and revolutionary and perhaps different
- At this moment not much, something visual may help.
- The range of artists included. I'd hope that "art" would be interpreted to include the sort of things that William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement produced.
- The range of artists mentioned, the left wing political slant and the opportunity to learn about the art history from a left wing point of view
- I grew up in a working class family and though I'm probably considered middle class now, my politics have always been to the left. So it does interest me to see what influence the left has had on art.
- Diversity of artists - artists I have heard of and I like their work. interested in the theme.
- Could be extremely interesting practical demonstration of theory - Marxist art history in action.
- Interest in socialism, interest in art!
- William Morris.
- Seeing work by people I haven't heard of, tracing connections between art and society/ ideas, historical perspective.
- Understanding the principles of left-wing beliefs though the ages and how these were creatively demonstrated.
- The fact that it sympathises with left thinking. As do I.
- The combination of artists I had and hadn't heard of. The left is appealing notion.
- The political element
- The section about William Morris.
- Some of the figures and personal stories are very appealing. Particularly interested in William Morris.
- I am interested in both politics and art/ film/ so the combination makes great appeal.
- It's unexpected, modern, provocative in its way, and it stimulates the thought.
- Interesting subject definitely worth exploring.
- It could include some really interesting art work. I'd want to know which artists were included before deciding.

- Socialism
- I'd like to see works that will no doubt have vitality, hopefully with their social context and the consequences of their making explained.
- Different artistic representations of essentially the same fundamental goal - equal rights.
- Bearing in mind that 'socialism' seems to have become a swear word in media political discourse it is refreshing that this essential relationship (between art and the left) is being brought back out into the open. The more students and school kids that attend the better - political art is not just 'Banksy'!
- I think it's exciting. The story of radical left politics in modern art is a really rich and compelling one. There has of course been a lot of shows and work on the revolutionary left and 20th-century avant-gardes, so it's appealing to take the story together with and back to the c19th and the arguable origins of the modern left in the French revolution. I think it also is a great show to do now, resonating with the rebirth of revolutionary and protest movements in 2011/12 (Egypt, Greece, Occupy).
- The evolution and history of socialist art
- I would enjoy seeing how art has been influenced by ideas of the left
- It's politics related and quite historical, I've rarely seen exhibitions tackle these themes directly, it would be quite fascinating to learn about this aspect of art history.
- It's an important theme.
- The content: I'm interested in what the influence of the left might have been (I've been meaning to come up to Liverpool to visit the galleries for a couple of years, & when I read what this exhibition would be about, I thought, maybe this is the thing that reminds me to go!)
- I do not subscribe to any definite political ideology or party but I am certainly on the left and am very interested in the history of social change.
- I am very Left-wing.
- The diverse ways artists have reacted to the industrial age, using its products or reacting against them (like Morris).
- I think the theme is a very interesting one and I am on the left so would be intrigued to see what art is included and why.
- It reflects my own political upbringing and attitudes.
- Appeals to my personal politics, artistic experience, and values.
- It's different. I've never been to an exhibition based on that subject.
- I love William Morris.
- Great paintings from David, Delacroix and Gericault, plus their being placed in an appropriate context. Morris and Ruskin(?) and their influence on everyday visual experience. I take it that the Arts and Crafts movement will get a look in.

- Looking forward to posters from ex-communist and currently communist states (Soviet Union, China, Cuba).
- I am interested in the featured artists and would find the narrative of this exhibition interesting. How they relate to each other - or not. I think the setting would appropriate and I would definitely consider going.
- I love William Morris's work.
- It intrigues me.
- Left-wing - so much art is aimed at / paid for / inspired by aristocracy

Question 7b: What puts you off the exhibition?

Specific comments of note:

- In my experience, often exhibitions or works that discuss what influences the arts, have a tendency to have an over pretentious almost snobby, exclusionist approach to presenting findings.
- Will some of the work be sub-par amateur stuff with good intentions but no technical skill
- It might be a bit dour.
- It's in Liverpool.
- Hints of worthiness. There is an image of humourlessness and an academic treatise.
- My own apathy.
- There might be a lot of words to understand the theme
- How much is it going to cost?
- Title can put me off.
- It needs to not sound exclusive - I believe you're trying to investigate how art has been influential in politics and how it has made a real difference to lives so don't put people off by sounding either too exclusive or too flippant.
- Overtly political?
- A probable odour of sanctity.
- Nothing. If you put it on I'll come and see it.
- It will be the price and the journey and expense from Manchester to Liverpool, especially that I have worked as an 'Arts Lecturer', teaching adults for 30+ years. I feel it should be subsidised, free or donations.
- If there are too many lengthy explanations of the art works.
- Politics is effecting every bodies lives at the moment and sometimes when you visit galleries you want some escapism
- Lefty, worthy types en mass.

- Is it too overreaching? I.e will the surface only be scratched rather than explored.
- Nothing. Perhaps my only concern is that it might be too 'niche' for Tate Liverpool. But it will certainly attract people from all over the country and beyond. And obviously, Liverpool has a proud Left-wing heritage (even if it's not a particularly Francophile place), so it should be some appeal to art-loving Liverpudlians.
- The original titles maybe but otherwise nothing.
- I don't want a political lecture from middle class people
- Participation art.
- Lack of clear definition.
- Left wing dogma.
- Porn. A red canvas, A brick wall with no attempt to give a message. An untidy bedroom, come and see my daughters, even better my sons with moldy toast under the bed and socks that could walk to the washing basket, I hate pretense.
- Nothing really - as long as it isn't too "worthy" but I don't imagine it would be at the Tate.
- The possibility of the commentary being too academic; the social element being compromised by the exhibition's presentation as an 'exclusive' or 'clever' interpretation.
- Could be very fragmented - immense field to cover.
- Needs more impressionists (I like impressionists)...
- Could be rather earnest in political tone and people don't like being lectured to.
- Maybe the political language could be too complex?
- The worry that the political milieu represented might offer a reductive conception of what 'the left' signifies rather than capturing the broad range of identities present within this.
- No mention of El Lissitzky featuring. It's not in Manchester!
- I live in London, alas
- Nothing really, it'd definitely be worth a visit.
- It could be too charity-like, meant to be well meaning but feel a bit too neutral.
- That it may be a little pretentious.
- Gorilla girls.
- Sometimes with w8y historical shows there is a 'worthiness barrier' to overcome, but if one can get through this there is real nourishment to be had.
- If it becomes too much like propaganda.
- That it will still not provide a proper political dimension, such as being self-reflective on how TATE has become a corporate brand, &

very much an institution supporting status quo ideas (sorry, but as an artist, I feel it very much represents the 'establishment')

- The fact that it narrow to Europe and no mention is made of 'Black African or Caribbean' within the context of Europe. the omission makes me think that it will not be featured as been significant.
- Realistically, because of where I live I'd be more likely to go if it was in London. I find the 4 suggested titles only comprehensible once I know what the exhibition is about (and even then it's a stretch in some cases). In 3 cases I find them so hard to make sense of that I wouldn't look to find out more. For some reason I found 'Left March' intriguing enough that I WOULD want to find out more.
- If it is too male oriented - you only mention Guerrilla Girls.... so do women only become involved in Left art in the late 20th century. Don't be sexist!
- That it may become a politicised exhibition - to balance it you will need to acknowledge somewhere in the exhibition that other political movements have equally been influential on other artists.
- Not quite sure what will be in it. Poster key along with title. Something that looks good in London tube as well as locality of Liverpool.
- It seems to be based on a very dry political thesis rather than aesthetic value. In other words, it sounds dull. I can't help imagining all the art will either be beige or look like William Morris wallpaper.
- The suggested titles which fail to do justice to a good idea.
- The bandwagon jumping of some of the artists.
- It's in Liverpool and I live in Brighton. It should be great for those that can get to it though.
- Too stuffy - must be done with humour.
- I am not at all put out about this exhibit.
- Art with a political agenda is often dull, unimaginative, humourless and lacking in real passion.
- Not too keen on anything overtly political - focussing on the art is more important to me - I want to see an art exhibition that refers to the politics rather than a political museum-style exhibition with references to art.
- The political themes may not come through clearly - it could be a bit abstract or forced.
- Nothing specific - I am assuming it won't be too po faced.
- The rather uncreative titles that have been suggested so far.
- The potential to be too much about politics. I'm not expressing this very well. I suppose I mean party politics, which always turns me off.

Appendix 3.

‘Ways of Looking’, Educational Methodology Document, Tate Liverpool¹

Ways of Looking

A Personal Approach – what do I bring?

All responses to works of art are conditioned by our different personal and social experiences. These cannot be ignored and should be our starting point when thinking about an artwork.

yourself your world your experience

yourself**What are your first reactions to the work? Why does it make you feel or think like that?**

There are fundamental differences between us that condition the way we see things. Gender, race, class and age will all determine the way we look at and understand art, as will our attitudes, values and beliefs.

your world**What does the work remind you of? Why does it remind you of that?**

The world we live in, and the things we surround ourselves with, will frame the way we see things. For example, our country or region of origin, family, homes and environments affect our interpretation.

your experience**What can you connect the work to?**

We all bring different experiences and interests to the Gallery. For example, things we have seen on television or at the cinema; places we have visited; things that have happened to us. This diversity of experience means that we may react to art in the Gallery in different ways.

¹ Authored by Tate Liverpool, © Tate.

Looking at the Subject – what is it about?

Each artwork can be looked at in terms of what it is telling us, be it through its content, its title or the type of work it is. In some cases the subject of the work will reside in its form (as in very abstract work).

content message title theme type/genre

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| content | What is the work? What is it about? What is happening? |
| message | What does the work represent? Moving beyond a straight description of what you see, try to speculate on what the work might stand for. Are there any symbols you recognise? |
| title | What does the artist call it? Does this change the way we see the work? |
| theme | What is the theme of the work? |
| type/genre | How does the work relate to the traditional genres of History painting, the Nude, Landscape or Still Life painting? |

Looking at the Object – what can I see?

Every work of art, whether a painting, sculpture, video or photograph has its own intrinsic qualities. These will inform our reading of it. To understand these qualities we need to look at the artwork formally, for example in terms of line, tone, colour, space, and mass. Equally, looking at physical properties such as materials and processes will deepen our understanding of the object. Modern art materials allow for an unlimited array of colours, textures and quality of paint. Artists have moved on from the time when pigments dictated the colours they could use. Sculptural materials and techniques have expanded in a similar way. At the beginning of the twentieth century, artists such as Marcel Duchamp presented common, everyday objects in the gallery as works of art. The freedom artists now have over materials has turned modern art on its head. Contemporary art can be made from almost anything – film and video, found objects, food, or furniture – materials whose histories and associations affect our understanding of the work.

colour shapes marks surface
scale space materials process composition

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| colour | What colours does the artist use? Why do you think s/he used these colours? How are they organised? What effects do they create? |
| shapes | What kind of shapes can you find in the painting or sculpture? Are they curved, straight, sharp or pointed? What effects do they create? |
| marks | What kind of marks does the artist use? What effect do they have? |
| surface | What is the surface like? What kind of textures can you see? What effects do they create? |
| scale | How big is the work? Why is it this size? Would its meaning change if it was bigger or smaller? |
| space | What sense or illusion of space or depth do you find in the work? Or is there none? Do some artists want us to realise that a painting is only paint on a flat canvas? |
| materials | What materials is the work made of? Are they traditional art materials or 'found' materials? How would your response to the work change if the artist used a different material? What associations or connotations do the materials carry? |
| process | How has the work been made? Has the artist made it or has it been fabricated? What kind of skills were involved? What changes might have occurred to the piece while it was being made? How visible or invisible is the process of its making? If it is an installation, how has it been assembled? If it is a video piece, how was it filmed and how is it projected? |
| composition | How is the work organised or put together? |

Looking at the Context – relating the work in the Gallery to the wider world

Investigating when, where and by whom a work was made can reveal more about it. To read the work simply in terms of the artist's biography, or by an assumption of what the artist's intentions were, is not the only way of looking at a work of art. Researching the context within which the work was produced (for example the political climate, social history and culture of the time) will tell us more. Equally the present day context may give us a different reading. The positioning in the Gallery and the information presented with it can reveal another story. Seeing the work within a broader visual culture can also generate new and even contradictory meanings for the paintings and sculptures.

when where who history other arts
other fields of knowledge the present the hang interpretation the environment

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| when | When was the work made? Can we make any connections between the work and the period in which it was made? |
| where | Where was it made? Does the work tell us anything about the place in which it was made? |
| who | Who made it? What do we know about the artist? Who was it made for? |
| history | Can you relate it to the social and political history of the time? |
| other arts | Can you link it to the arts of the period, for example film, music, literature, or design? |
| other fields of knowledge | How does the work relate to other areas of knowledge, for example science, geography, mathematics, or ecology? |
| the present | How do people view the work today? Is it the same or different from how it might have originally been seen? |
| the hang | How much space is around the work? Which other works are next to or near to the piece? Do they look similar or completely different? Are there any visual or thematic connections between these works? Is it a monographic display? |
| interpretation | What kind of information is there to support the work, for example labels, extended captions, wall texts? How does this information affect your experience of the work? Would you still feel the same if you did not have any information? |
| the environment | What size is the room? How does this affect your experience of the work? How much room do you think works of art need? Think about scale as well as size. What colour are the walls? Does this affect the environment? What kind of lighting is used? Would the work look different in another setting, for example in a studio, or outdoors? |

7 November 2013

Art Turning Left: How values changed making 1789 – 2013

8 November 2013 – 2 February 2014

Tate Liverpool

Sponsored by Liverpool John Moores University and a range of other supporters

@tateliverpool
#ArtTurningLeft

Press Information

- *Art Turning Left* press release
- *The Office of Useful Art* press release
- List of works
- Highlights from Ruth Ewan's *A Jukebox of People Trying to Change the World* 2003
- Related events
- Visitor information

Wi-fi is available throughout the gallery.

For further information, please call 0151 702 7444/5 or email alison.cornmell@tate.org.uk

Art Turning Left: How values changed making 1789-2013

Tate Liverpool

8 November 2013 – 2 February 2014

£8.00 / £6.00

Sponsored by Liverpool John Moores University and a range of other supporters

Art Turning Left is the first exhibition to examine how the production and reception of art has been influenced by left-wing values, from the French Revolution to the present day. Displaying works by artists including William Morris, Guy Debord and Guerrilla Girls, *Art Turning Left* explores how artists across the globe have values linked to the political left embedded in their modes of production and distribution. The exhibition will demonstrate how key left-wing values such as collectivism, equality and the search for alternative economies have underpinned transformations in the processes of art-making and the reception of art.

Left-wing political values have continuously influenced the making of art and visual culture, from the way in which William Morris organised his production line to the deliberate anonymity of the designers of the Atelier Populaire posters in Paris 1968. The direct involvement of visual artists in politics and the social and ethical values of left-wing politics emerged during the French Revolution, when artists such as Jacques-Louis David granted permission for their artwork to be reproduced to support the Republican cause. Versions of David's iconic image of *The Death of Marat* 1793-4, one of the most famous images of the Revolution, will feature.

Art Turning Left is a thematic exhibition, based on key concerns that span different historical periods and geographic locations. They range from equality in production and collective authorship to the question of how to merge art and life. The exhibition moves away from the political messages behind the works and claims about the ability of art to deliver political and social change, and instead focuses on the effect political values have had on the processes, aesthetics and display of artworks. This structure allows for a comparative analysis of artistic materials, production methods and public reception, juxtaposing work by artists who have been influenced by similar social or political concerns but have brought to life very dissimilar art objects at different moments in history and in distant parts of the globe.

Artists include Marianne Brandt, Luis Camnitzer, Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane, Equipo 57, Ruth Ewan, Pinot Gallizio, Piero Gilardi, G.R.A.V., Walter Gropius, The Hackney Flashers, El Lissitzky, Maximilien Luce, Cildo Meireles, The Mass Observation Movement, David Medalla, László Moholy-Nagy, Wendelien van Oldenborgh, Tim Rollins and K. O. S., Allan Sekula, and Martha Rosler.

Located at the heart of *Art Turning Left* is *The Office of Useful Art*, a working office and education centre. *The Office of Useful Art* will remain open throughout the exhibition and is Tate Liverpool's contribution to a long-term project that promotes the idea of art as a process that should have real effect in society, as part of everyday civic life, rather than a rarefied spectator experience. Also programmed in parallel with *Art Turning Left*, Tate Liverpool will present *Palle Nielsen: The Model* a display of archival material from Palle Nielsen's social experiment *The Model - A Model for a Qualitative Society* 1968.

Art Turning Left is curated by Francesco Manacorda, Artistic Director, Tate Liverpool, Lynn Wray, Collaborative Doctoral Award Researcher at Liverpool John Moores University and Eleanor Clayton, Assistant Curator.

- ENDS -

For further information, interviews and images please contact Tate Liverpool Press Office:
alison.cornmell@tate.org.uk or laura.deveney@tate.org.uk 0151 702 7444/5

The Office of Useful Art

Located in *Art Turning Left: How values changed making 1789 – 2013*

8 November 2013 – 2 February 2014

Re-entry is free when you sign up to the Office of Useful Art Association

Programmed and presented in collaboration with Grizedale Arts, Liverpool John Moores University, Tania Bruguera and the Van Abbemuseum.

Located at the heart of *Art Turning Left: How values changed making 1789-2013* is *The Office of Useful Art*, a working office and education centre. *The Office* is Tate Liverpool's contribution to a long-term project that aims to explore the idea of the usefulness of art.

The Office is presented by Tate Liverpool in collaboration with Plus Tate partner, Grizedale Arts, based in the Lake District, and exhibition principal supporter Liverpool John Moores University. Using the exhibition as a textbook it offers visitors a platform to develop a renewed understanding of art, as a process that plays a fundamental role in shaping the world in much the same way that pre 20th century art predominately operated as a religious, ritual, practical or educational tool as part of daily life.

Open throughout the exhibition, *The Office* has an open booking system giving visitors and local groups and societies the opportunity to host both private and public talks, activities, workshops, debates and discussions. From Philosophy in Pubs and the Workers Education Association to presentations from undergraduate and postgraduate students at Liverpool John Moores University, *The Office* offers a programme of varied and dynamic events exploring the idea of useful art. Also staffing *The Office* are students from Liverpool John Moores University's School of Art and Design who will engage visitors in discussion about the ethos of *The Office*.

In line with the philosophy of *The Office* it is furnished with examples and case studies of useful art and working furniture including a desk and shelves from the Coniston Institute Library designed by Liam Gillick. Repurposed furniture also features in *The Office* from a table that visitors can use to take rubbings, creating wallpaper with a political message, to chairs that were designed by Practical Equipment Limited 1936 as consequence of utopian modernist movements to integrate art into society.

The Office also functions as a recruitment centre for The Asociación de Arte Util, or the Useful Art Association, a new international membership organisation that seeks to promote and implement Arte Util or Useful Art. The Association was originally initiated by Cuban artist Tania Bruguera and, in line with the Criteria of Arte Util, it is now being evolved by a growing user group into an international body to promote ways for art to work effectively in ordinary life and to initiate and support new projects that fulfil the Criteria of Arte Util.

Here visitors to *The Office* can enrol as members of the Association and see examples of case studies from the Museum of Arte Util, running concurrently at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. Visitors are also encouraged to recommend projects for inclusion in the archive or suggest ideas for new schemes that could be developed giving them the opportunity to take an active role in the future of the Association.

-ENDS-

To book

To arrange a talk, activity, workshop, debate or discussion please contact Jessica Fairclough
jessica.fairclough@tate.org.uk

The Uses of Art: The Legacies of 1848 and 1989

The Office of Useful Art and the Useful Art Association is part of an ongoing collaboration between Tania Bruguera, Grizedale Arts, Van Abbemuseum, Liverpool John Moores University and L'Internationale confederation of European museums, Tate Liverpool, Ikon Gallery Birmingham and MIMA as part of the 5 year project 'The Uses of Art: The Legacies of 1848 and 1989'.

Over the next six months the Association will develop four useful art initiatives in four locations with MIMA, Tate Liverpool, Ikon Gallery, Grizedale Arts, Liverpool John Moores University and with the European partners of L'Internationale.

The Office of Useful Art is a collaboration with the L'internationale network and supported using public funding by Arts Council England and with the Culture Programme of the European Union.

The Criteria of Useful Art

The Criteria proposes new uses for art within society and challenges the field within which it operates (civic, legislative, pedagogical, scientific, economic etc). It specifies that art should be 'timing specific', responding to the urgencies of the moment with the ability to pursue sustainability while adapting to changing conditions. It should be implemented in the real, actually work and have practical, beneficial outcomes for its users. Hierarchies should be changed with authors replaced with initiators and spectators with users. In essence art should re-establish aesthetics as a system of transformation.

The Association

www.arteutil.net/open-call/

From the incarnations in Liverpool and Eindhoven the Useful Art Association membership will grow, with the current AAU website being developed as the principle interface for the membership which will offer:

- A growing social, political and active network of members
- A communication forum for Useful Art activity
- Regular updates, newsletters on activities of the Association
- A database of case studies that exemplify the ambitions of the organisation
- Contributing to a growing lexicon of terms to describe Useful Art
- Opportunities to develop, support and contribute to new Useful Art projects
- Opportunities to participate in special events such as work parties, field trips and education seminars including the Annual John Ruskin Memorial Lecture
- Invitations to an annual Useful Association convention with Grizedale Arts in Coniston in the English Lake District
- Opportunities, as part of the user group, to shape the future and direction of the Association.

List of works

All benches located in exhibition are courtesy of Equipo 57

Equipo 57, formed 1957

Banco 1961

5 benches, ash wood and steel rods

400 × 1850 × 460 mm

'Do we need to know who makes art?'

Atelier Populaire, formed 1968

Selection of posters, all *untitled* 1968

Screenprint on paper

Equipo 57, formed 1957

Interactividad Cine I 1957

9 gouaches on paper

340 x 510 mm

Equipo 57, formed 1957

Film Experiencia nº 1. Base teórica: interactividad del espacio plástico 1957

DVD

Constant, 1920-2005, Guy Debord, 1931-1994, Pinot Gallizio, 1902-1964, Asger Jorn, 1914-1973, Jan Kotik, 1916-2002, Giors Melanotte, 1935-2000, Piero Simondo, born 1928

Untitled (Collective Operation) 1956

Oil on canvas

Luis Camnitzer, born 1937

Painting Under Hypnosis 1980

Print on paper

279 x 203 mm

Luis Camnitzer, born 1937

Selbstbedienung (Self-Service) 1996-2010

Installation, paper and stamp

897 x 300 x 400 mm

Rubber stamp: 77 x 60 x 37 mm

Guerrilla Girls, formed 1985

[no title] 1985-90

Screenprint on paper

430 x 560 mm

Guerrilla Girls, formed 1985

[no title] 1985-90

Screenprint on paper

430 x 560 mm

Guerrilla Girls, formed 1985

[no title] 1985-90

Screenprint on paper

280 x 710 mm

Guerrilla Girls, formed 1985

[no title] 1985-90

Screenprint on paper

435 x 560 mm

Guerrilla Girls, formed 1985
[no title] 1985-90
Screenprint on paper
330 x 560 mm

Guerrilla Girls, formed 1985
[no title] 1985-90
Screenprint on paper
432 x 560 mm

Guerrilla Girls, formed 1985
[no title] 1985-90
Screenprint on paper
430 x 560 mm

Komar and Melamid, formed 1970s
The People's Choice 1995
12 lithographs on paper
492 x 670 mm

'Can art affect everyone?'

El Lissitzky, 1890-1941
Victory Over the Sun series
Ten lithographs on paper

El Lissitzky, 1890-1941
Design for Soviet Pavilion, Pressa, Cologne 1928

El Lissitzky, 1890-1941
The Story of Two Squares 1922
Book
140 x 400 x 274 mm

Atelier Populaire, formed 1968
Selection of posters, all *untitled* 1968
Screenprint on paper

Lucio Martinez, born 1947
International Day of Solidarity with the People and Students of Angola 1972
Poster
535 x 330 mm

OSPAAAL, formed 1966
International Day of Solidarity with the Congo 1968
Poster
535 x 330 mm

Jesus Forjans, born 1928
International Week of Solidarity with Africa 1969
Poster
535 x 330 mm

Elena Serrano
Day of the Heroic Guerrilla 1968
Poster
495 x 345 mm

OSPAAAL, formed 1966

Vladimir Lenin 1967-1975

Poster

535 x 330 mm

Faustino Perez, 1920-1992

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and Students 1970

Poster

545 x 330 mm

Bertolt Brecht, 1898-1956

Six original collages for the War Primer Kriegsfibel 1939 - 1955

Collage on paper

Bertolt Brecht, 1898-1956

War Primer 1955

Book

Brecht: A Man's a Man 1926

Film

27 minutes

Adam Broomberg, born 1970 and Oliver Chanarin, born 1971

War Primer 2 2011

Hardback book

300 x 250 x 20 mm

Adam Broomberg, born 1970 and Oliver Chanarin, born 1971

War Primer 2 2011

Hardback book

300 x 250 x 20 mm

Adam Broomberg, born 1970 and Oliver Chanarin, born 1971

War Primer 2 2011

Hardback book

300 x 250 x 20 mm

Tucumán Arde Archive. Documentation related to different actions and works carried out by this group 1966-1968

Documents, photographs, press cuttings and other materials

The Hackney Flashers, formed 1974

Domestic Labour and Visual Representation 1974 - 78

24 slides and a small booklet

The Hackney Flashers, formed 1974

Hackney Flashers Scrapbook: 1975 Index of Work 1975

Scrapbook

370 x 250 mm

The Hackney Flashers, formed 1974

Hackney Flashers Mockup Poster

Pen and photocopy on paper

310 x 200 mm

The Hackney Flashers, formed 1974

Untitled

Black and white cut-out newspaper

260 x 180 mm

The Hackney Flashers, formed 1974

Untitled

Black and white photograph

157 x 204 mm

The Hackney Flashers, formed 1974

Untitled

Black and white photograph

201 x 252 mm

The Hackney Flashers, formed 1974

Untitled

Black and white photograph

132 x 202 mm

The Hackney Flashers, formed 1974

Untitled c. 1978

Black and white photograph

204 x 256 mm

Walter Crane, 1845-1915

Banner for The Worker's Union - Holloway Branch - Solidarity of Labour c. 1898

Single layer silk fabric banner. Ground of crimson and purple jacquard woven silk. Replacement borders of yellow polyester rep. Oil painted Images on each side.

3074 x 2927 mm

Walter Crane, 1845-1915

International Solidarity of Labour 1896

Print

365 x 275 mm

Walter Crane, 1845-1915

Solidarity of Labour 1889

Print

355 x 245 mm

Gerd Arntz, 1900-1988

Third Reich 1946

(Het derde rijk) 1946

Print

350 x 250 mm

Gerd Arntz, 1900-1988

(Cirkus Europa) 1936

Print

220 x 345 mm

Gerd Arntz, 1900-1988

Company Occupation 1936

(Bedrijfsbezetting) 1936

Print

220 x 345 mm

Gerd Arntz, 1900-1988

Russia 1934

(Rusland) 1934

Print

215 x 250 mm

Gerd Arntz, 1900-1988

White Terror 1932

(Weisser Terror) 1932

Woodcut

505 x 350 mm

Gerd Arntz, 1900-1988

Crisis 1931

(*Krise*) 1931

Woodcut

505 x 350 mm

Gerd Arntz, 1900-1988

Proofs from "Society and Economy" 1925-1949

(*Probedrucke aus "Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft"*) 1925-1949

Print

1260 x 630 mm

Gerd Arntz, 1900-1988

Quantative comparisons; signatures of image statistics to Wiener method 1925-1949

(*Mengenvergleiche ; Signaturen der Bildstatistik nach Wiener Methode*) 1925-1949

Print

1260 x 840 mm

Braco Dimitrijevic, born 1948

Casual Passer-by I met at 1.43 pm, Venice 1976 1976

Photograph, black and white, on canvas, photograph, black and white, on paper and certificate on paper

Dimensions variable

Anni Albers, 1899-1994

Wall hanging in black and white 1927/ 1964

Double weave, cotton and artificial silk in black and white

1490 x 1205 mm

László Moholy-Nagy, 1895-1946

Fotoplastiken; Jealousy 1927/ 1973

Gelatin silver print produced from the artists collaged photogram

575 x 423 mm

Wilhelm Wagenfeld, 1900-1990

MT8 Table Lamp 1924

Nickel plated brass and milk coloured glass

355 x 178 mm

Lyonel Feininger, 1871-1956

Cathedral, Title Page for: Manifesto and Programme of the State Bauhaus, April 1919

(*Manifest und Programm des Staatlichen Bauhauses, April 1919, mit Titelblatt "Kathedrale" von Lyonel Feininger*) 1919

Woodcut with letterpress on paper

319 x 196 mm

Otto Lindig, 1895-1966

Sugar Bowl 1930 - 1945

Red earthenware with a white tin glaze sugar bowl with rounded sides

76 mm high, 122 mm diameter

Walter Gropius, 1883-1969

Sommerfeld House, Berlin. Joseph Albers' window in the staircase 1923

(*Glasfenster von Joseph Albers im Haus Sommerfeld*) 1923

Gelatin silver print

170 x 228 mm

Walter Gropius, 1883-1969

Sommerfeld House, Berlin, hall with staircase 1920 - 1922
(Haus Sommerfeld Berlin, Vestibul und Treppenaufgang mit Sesseln von Marcel Breuer) 1920-1922
Gelatin silver print
170 x 230 mm

Marianne Brandt, 1893-1983
Desk Lamp 1928
Sheet-steel shade, steel arm and parts, cast-iron base, all external parts reddish bronzed, inside of shade coated with aluminium paint
470 mm

Gunta Stölz, 1897-1983
Design for a Jacquard woven wall hanging 1927
Watercolour and pen on paper
230 x 160 mm

László Moholy-Nagy, 1895-1946
Photogram IV 1922
Gelatin silver print
395 x 300 mm

Marianne Brandt, 1893-1983
Ashtray 1924
Brass and electroplated nickel silver
67 x 99 mm

'Can art infiltrate everyday life?'

Allan Sekula, 1951-2013
This Ain't China: A Photonovel 1974
Print on paper
29 black & white photographs mounted on board and single colour photograph mounted on board in 8 frames, 9 colour photographs mounted on board in single frame, text in 2 booklets, 2 chairs
Overall dimensions variable

Liubov Popova, 1889-1924
Embroidered book cover 1923 - 1924
458 x 315 mm

Liubov Popova, 1889-1924
Textile design c. 1923 - 1924
196 x 141 mm

Designer Unknown
Suprematist Dress Design Late 1920s
Gouache on paper
246 x 84 mm
Liubov Popova, 1889-1924
Textile design c. 1923 - 1924
138 x 170 mm

Liubov Popova, 1889-1924
Fabric design 1923-1924
Gouache on paper
160 x 316 mm

Liubov Popova, 1889-1924
Fabric design 1923-1924
Gouache and ink on paper
236 x 143 mm

Gustav Klucsis, 1895-1944
Radio-Orator No.1 "Loudspeaker of the Revolution". Radio-Orator No.2 "Lenin's Speech" 1922
Pencil gouache
126 x 174 mm

Gustav Klucsis, 1895-1944
Radio-Orator" Design for radio-orator and rostrum, no. 8 1922
Indian ink on paper
173 x 138 mm

Gustav Klucsis, 1895-1944
Ekran. Design for Screen, Rostrum and Propaganda Stand 1922
Ink on paper
347 x 190 mm

Gustav Klucsis, 1895-1944
Down with art. Long live agitational propaganda. Design for Propaganda Kiosk 1922
Ink on paper
279 x 175 mm

Alexandr Rodchenko, 1891-1956
Design for an advertisement for the Mossel'prom (Moscow agricultural industry) cafeteria 1923
Gouache on paper
489 x 340 mm

Chto Delat, formed 2003
Study, Study and Act Again 2011/2013
Multi-media installation

Chto Delat, formed 2003
Partisan Songspiel: A Belgrade Story 2009
Film with sound

Piero Gilardi, born 1942
Psichiatria Alternativa 1974 - 1982
Mixed media installation
1650 x 950 x h. 850 mm
Sculptures: 800 x 800 x h. 300 mm
Work on paper 1, framed: 800 x 600 x 70 mm
Work on paper 2, framed: 600 x 800 x 70 mm

'Does participation deliver equality?'

Roger Coward, born 1939
You and Me Here We Are - What Can be Said to be Going On? 1977
Photographic prints on paper, with wood

Jeremy Deller, born 1966 and Alan Kane, born 1961
Folk Archive 2000 - 2006
Mixed media
Dimensions variable

Ruth Ewan, born 1980
A Jukebox of People Trying to Change the World Ongoing archive since 2003
CD Jukebox

Tate Collective with Ruth Ewan and Åbäke, a Circuit commission
You feel like a threat don't you? 2013

32 page A4 booklet

David Medalla, born 1942
A Stitch in Time 1968 - 1972
Cotton, wood, steel and hemp
12000 x 370 mm

Francis Alÿs, born 1959
In collaboration with Rafael Ortega and Cuauhtémoc Medina
When Faith Moves Mountains (Cuando la fe mueve montañas) Lima 2002
Video with sound

Julio Le Parc, born 1928
Ensemble de onze jeux surprise 1967
Wood, plexiglas, plastic and motor
1899 x 3899 x 299 mm

Group Material, formed 1979
Democracy Wall, Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff, UK 1985
Archive
Dimensions variable

'Can pursuing equality change how art is made?'

Tim Rollins, born 1955
Amerika - For Karl 1989
Watercolour on paper on canvas
2330 x 3360 mm

Dong Zhengyi
The commune's fishpond 1975, September 1975
Poster
535 x 770 mm

Li Zhenhua
The brigade's ducks 1973, March 1973
Poster
535 x 770 mm

Zhao Kunhan, born 1945
The production brigade's reading room 1975, January 1975
Poster
535 x 770 mm

Yao Zhongxin
Drawing new pictures with a coloured brush 1975, September 1975
535 x 770 mm

Peasants' art creations flourish in Northwest China county 1974, 20 September 1974
Black and white photograph

Chinese women play important role in revolution and construction 1975, 20 February 1975
Black and white photograph

KP Brehmer, 1938-1997
The Soul and Feelings of a Worker 1978 - 80
Pencil on paper
Forty-two drawings, each 290 x 400 mm

Black-E Community Project
My Room 1982
1200 x 3040 mm

Portrait of William Morris in a smock Late 19th Century
Photograph

William and May Morris with the staff and friends of the Kelmscott Press 1893
Albumen print
152 x 209 mm
William Morris, 1834-1896
Design for Rose and Thistle Textile Late 19th Century
Pen and ink
826 x 686 mm

William Morris, 1834-1896
Rose and Thistle 1881
Hand printed cotton (indigo discharged and block printed)
4978 x 972 mm

William Morris, 1834-1896
Wallpaper stand book 1905
Wooden easel stand, wallpaper samples, leatherette cover
795 x 525 x 375 mm

News from Nowhere (Kelmscott Press edition) 1893
Book
205 x 140 mm

William Morris, 1834-1896
Rose and Thistle (Printing Block) c. 1881
Woodblock
500 x 300 x 80 mm

William Morris, 1834-1896
Rose and Thistle (Printing Block) c.1881
Woodblock (pearwood and metal with felt inlay)
500 x 300 x 80 mm

Worker's Photography Movement feature 'USSR in Construction' In AIZ No. 38 1931
Printed publication

Wendelien Van Oldenborgh, born 1962
Après la reprise, la prise 2009
Slide projection in architectural setting

'How can art speak with a collective voice?'

Maximilien Luce, 1858-1941
L'aciérie 1895
Oil on canvas
1160 x 890 mm

Michel Eugène Chevreul, 1786-1889
Des couleurs et de leurs applications aux arts industriels à l'aide des cercles chromatiques 1864
Printed publication

Michel Eugène Chevreul, 1786-1889
De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs... 1839
Atlas

275 x 925 mm

Alexandr Rodchenko, 1891-1956
Five posters from History Of The VKP(b) series 1926
Lithograph on paper
Each 660 x 521 mm

Julian Trevelyan, 1910-1988
Bolton Mills 1938
Graphite, ink, watercolour and collage on paper
535 x 718 mm

Julian Trevelyan, 1910-1988
Rubbish May be Shot Here 1937
Graphite, ink, watercolour, printed paper and card on paper
310 x 540 mm

Humphrey Spender, 1910-2005
This is your photo 1937-1938
Exhibition print

Humphrey Spender, 1910-2005
Inside 85 Davenport Street, planning day's activities with resident Mass observers 1937-1938
Exhibition print (from negative)

Humphrey Spender, 1910-2005
Street life - Children at play 1937-8
Photograph on paper
127 x 178 mm

Humphrey Spender, 1910-2005
Railway- level crossing 1937-1938
Exhibition print (from negative)

Humphrey Spender, 1910-2005
Traffic Accident 1937-1938
Exhibition print

Humphrey Spender, 1910-2005
Wagon Yard 1937-1938
Exhibition print (from negative)

Humphrey Spender, 1910-2005
Blackpool Amusement Park- Preparing for 'Mystery Horror Ride' 1937
Exhibition print (from negative)

Humphrey Spender, 1910-2005
Tom Harrison fooling around- probably at Ashington Miners study rooms 1937
Exhibition print (from negative)

Humphrey Spender, 1910-2005
The Secular Funeral of John Shaw 1937-1938
Exhibition print (from negative)

Mass Observation Movement, formed 1937
Secular funeral", ts, 21.9 JJ Shaw of Davenport Street 1937
Archival document
254 x 200 mm

Mass Observation Movement, formed 1937
D.S.233 Bryher (CO12) May 12th 1937 1937

Archival document (5 pages)
330 x 213 mm

Mass Observation Movement, formed 1937
D.S. 164 Nora Spencer (CO31) May 12th 1937 1937
Archival document (3 pages)
255 x 202 mm

Mass Observation Movement, formed 1937
D.S. 301 Gentry (CO17) May 12th 1937 1937
Archival document (3 pages)
255 x 205 mm

Mass Observation Movement, formed 1937
D.S. 267 Brian Dawson (CO19) May 12th 1937 1937
Archival document (5 pages)
330 x 210 mm

Mass Observation Movement, formed 1937
D.S. 477 I Rowarth (CO30) May 12th 1937 1937
Archival document (2 pages)
330 x 205 mm

Mass Observation Movement, formed 1937
F T Scott - D.S. 482 (CO42) May 12th 1937 1937
Archival document (14 pages)
Each 255 x 205 mm

Mass Observation Movement, formed 1937
Letter from BB to THH, ts, 2pp, 18.2[?], results of street survey and enclosing 7 graphs with statistical data from the street survey "A Day in the Life of Davenport Street" (Women's Headgear, People at Front and Back, Men's Headgear, Traffic)- 1937
Archival document (13 pages)
256 x 202 mm

Mass Observation Movement, formed 1937
170. G.S. Taylor, Dominant Image Reports for April 1937
Archival document (4 pages)
252 x 200 mm

Mass Observation Movement, formed 1937
Edney, Dominant Image Reports for March c. 1937
Archival document
253 x 200 mm

Martha Rosler, born 1943
If You Lived Here 1989
Archive

IRWIN, founded 2003
Retroavantgarde 2000/2009
Mixed media installation
2800 x 6500 mm

'Are there ways to distribute art differently?'

Cildo Meireles, born 1948
Insertions into Ideological Circuits 2: Banknote Project
(*Inserções em Circuitos Ideológicos: Projeto Cédula*) 1970
Series of 27 banknotes

Ink on banknote
70 x 150 mm

Cildo Meireles, born 1948
Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Coca-Cola Project
(*Interções em Circuitos Ideológicos: Projeto Coca-Cola*) 1970
3 glass bottles, 3 metal caps, liquid and adhesive labels with text
250 x 60 x 60 mm

René Viénet
Can Dialectics Break Bricks? 1973
Black and white video
Courtesy of the artist

Situationist International, 1957-1972
Détournements x5
Prints on paper
approx. 280 x 230 mm

Situationist International, 1957-1972
Internationale Situationnist Map
Print on paper
approx. 280 x 230 mm

Situationist International, 1957-1972
Original détournement collages x6
Collages and print on paper
Dimensions variable

Guy Debord
Historie de fertes (la bottiglia di Debord) 1953
Collage on bottle

King Mob, formed 1970s
The Bash Street Kids 1969
Print, on paper
430x 300 mm

King Mob, formed 1970s
Luddites: 69 1969
Print, on paper
760 x 510 mm

King Mob, formed 1970s
Once Upon a Time There Was a Place Called Notting Hill Gate 1988
Print, on paper
190 x 235 mm

King Mob, formed 1970s
What is Culture? n.d.
Print, on paper

King Mob, formed 1970s
It was Meant to be great but its Horrible Confessions S. Claus 1968
Print, on paper

Jacques-Louis David, 1748-1825
Marat at the moment of his death
(*Marat tel qu'il était au moment de sa mort*) 1794
4 Etchings

381 x 312 mm

Jacques-Louis David, 1748-1825

The Death of Marat 1793-4

Oil paint on canvas

1113 x 856 mm

Zvono Group, formed 1982

Art and Soccer 1986

Video of performance

4 minutes, 11 seconds

Zvono Group, formed 1982

Mondrian Street Action 1986

Video of performance

2 minutes, 3 seconds

Christopher Kulhendran Thomas, born 1979

www.when-platitudes-become-form.lk 2013

Emory Douglas, born 1943

Supplement to The Black Panther, 25-07-1970 1971

3 posters

445 x 290 mm

Jose Guadalupe Posada, 1852-1913

La Calavera del Editor Popular Antonio Vanegas Arroyo 1907

Letterpress/ photorelief on paper

355 x 267 mm

Leopoldo Mendez, 1902-1969

Zapata. Toda la tierra para los campesinos 1938

Woodcut and letterpress on paper

295 x 202 mm

Jose Guadalupe Posada, 1852-1913

La Calavera de Pascual Orozco 1912

Letterpress/ photorelief on paper

349 x 255 mm

Jose Chavez Morado, 1909-2002

Corrido de los tranvias 1939

Linocut and letterpress on paper

438 x 337 mm

Chto Delat, formed 2003

Newspaper 2013

Newspapers for distribution in gallery

Black Mask, formed 1960s

Black Mask, Dec 1966 1966

Print, on paper

255 x 330 mm

Black Mask, formed 1960s

Museum Closed 1966

Print, on paper

215 x 280 mm

Goldin + Senneby, formed 2004

Money will be like dross: The August Nordenskiöld Alchemy Furnace 1754-1792

Metal alchemy furnace

650 x 750 x 600 mm

Goldin + Senneby, formed 2004

Money will be like dross: A replica instruction for the August Nordenskiöld alchemy furnace 2010-2013

Wood, photographic print, paper

Geoffrey Hendricks, born 1931

Flux Reliquary n.d. [c.1970]

1 perspex box with 7 compartments containing flux relics nos.: 1. shortened biro; 2. coil of wire; 3. nail parings in phial; 4. animal excreta in separate transparent plastic box; 5. small pebble; 6. phial of tacks; 7. bottle of liquid
120 x 93 x 25 mm

George Maciunas, 1931-1978

Communists Must Give Revolutionary Leadership in Culture, by Henry Flynt, with pre-fabricated brick by George Maciunas 1965

Print on paper, with pre-fabricated brick

Fluxus, established 1961

V TRE No. 5 March 1965

Print, on brown paper

560 x 430 mm

Fluxus, established 1961

V TRE No. 7 01 February 1966

Print, on green paper

560 x 430 mm

Fluxus, established 1961

V TRE No. 8 May 1966

Print, on white paper

560 x 430 mm

Fluxus, established 1961

V TRE No. 1 January 1964

Print on paper, mounted on board

950 x 612 mm

León Ferrari, born 1920

Selection from *We Did Not Know*

Six digital prints on paper

420 x 297 mm

León Ferrari, born 1920

Selection from *Never Again*

Six digital prints on paper

420 x 297 mm

Pinot Gallizio, 1902-1964

Industrial Painting 1958

Monoprinted oil and acrylic paint and typographic ink on canvas

Displayed dimensions variable

Milan Knizak, born 1940

Flux Dreams 1969 -1970

1 perspex box with 7 compartments containing red, green, yellow, and mauve transparent boxes; black and white opaque boxes [the latter containing a new penny piece]; and 1 sea shell

120 x 93 x 25 mm

Carla Liss, 1944-2012

Sacrament Fluxkit n.d. [1968-69]

1 white opaque plastic box containing 9 sealed glass bottles

66 x 66 x 52 mm

George Maciunas, 1931-1978

Breath Flux Test n.d. [1971-73]

1 white opaque plastic box containing a meter/pointer glued to the base of the lid
66 x 66 x 51 mm

Saito Takako, born 1929

Fluxchess: Grinder Chess ca.1965-1970

1 wooden box containing chess pieces (28 blue and white grinding stones and 4 buffer brushes) set into 64 holes drilled in the box base
170 x 170 x 74 mm

Ben Vautier, born 1935

Theatre d'art Total 1967

1 Perspex box containing 27 score cards (including 1 duplicate and 1 torn up as per instructions) in a plastic bag
120 x 93 x 12 mm

Robert Watts, 1923-1988

Flux Rock Marked by Volume in cc n.d. [1964-70]

1 hinged wooden box with clip fastener containing large smooth rock marked '325'
130 x 130 x 64 mm

Selected highlights from Ruth Ewan's *A Jukebox of People Trying to Change the World* 2013

***The World Turned Upside Down (Diggers' Song)* c.1714, Gerrard Winstanley**

The Diggers' Song is about land rights, inspired by the Diggers movement, founded by Winstanley in 1649 as The True Levellers. The Diggers attempted to reform existing social order with an agrarian lifestyle based upon their ideas for the creation of small egalitarian rural communities. A modernised version of the song was composed by Leon Rosselson in 1975, and taken into the charts in 1985 by Billy Bragg.

***Chartist Anthem* c.1840, author unknown**

This song refers to the People's Charter drawn up by the British Chartists in 1838 demanding suffrage for all men over the age of 21. The Chartist movement is thought to be the first mass working-class labour movement in the world.

The Suffrage Flag* c.1915, words William P. Adkinson to the tune of *Bonnie Blue Flag

*This band is for all reforms,
War shall be at an end,
Bayonets and swords shall rust,
We'll use the brain, the pen.*

Written in support of the US Suffragette movement (1848–1920).

***Freiheit* 1936, words Karl Ernst, music Peter Daniel**

This song was composed by the German anti-fascists of the International Brigade, who helped defend Madrid during the Spanish Civil War.

Union Maid* 1940, words Woody Guthrie to the tune of *The Merry Farmer

Written in response to a request for a union song from a female point of view, this is one of the many pro-union songs written by Guthrie during his time as a member of the Almanac Singers.

***Talking Atomic Blues* 1946, Vern Partlow**

Einstein says he's scared, and when Einstein's scared I'm scared.

A rare early Cold War anti-bomb song, this semi-satirical, talking blues folk tune is a call to action to control and limit the proliferation of atomic weapons.

***Hammer Song* 1949, Pete Seeger and Lee Hays**

Written in the 1940s in support of the progressive movement, this song went on to be recorded worldwide in many languages. It became a key song of the civil-rights movement, and was recorded by artists such as Sam Cooke.

***It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)* 1965, Bob Dylan**

Although Dylan later said this song 'means nothing', critics have claimed that it triggered a whole new wave of 'finger-pointing' songs.

***Yo Defiendo Mi Tierra (I Defend My Land)* 1965, Rolando Alarcón**

I defend my land because it's mine, because it's mine.

This song is rooted in the tradition of Chilean nueva canción from the 1960s and early 1970s, a type of protest/social song often talking about poverty, disempowerment, the Unidad Popular, human rights and democracy. Chile's path took a different turn, however, from the socialist visions of many nueva canción artists. Following a military coup, politically engaged artists of the left faced extreme limitations and violent treatment from the dictatorship in response to their activism and affiliations.

I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free 1967, words Dick Dallas, music Billy Taylor
Made famous by Nina Simone's 1967 recording, *I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free* quickly became an anthem for the civil-rights movement. It has since been used as the theme for the 2004 Olympic games and been featured in an advertisement for Coca-Cola

War Pigs 1970, Black Sabbath
*Politicians hide themselves away
They only started the war
Why should they go out to fight?
They leave that role to the poor.*

War Pigs tells of the horrors of war. The lyrics are adapted from war stories heard by the band whilst performing at a US Air Force base.

Free Palestine Now 1976, Ruthie Gorton
Gorton began singing as a result of her involvement in the civil-rights movement of the 1960s. Throughout the 1970s she travelled, singing, writing and learning songs from people involved in the struggle for freedom in many different parts of the world. In 1976 she wrote, in reference to this song, that 'as a Jew and a US citizen, I feel a special responsibility to speak out about the atrocities being committed against Palestinian people in my name'.

Africa Unite 1979, Bob Marley and The Wailers
A politically charged track from Marley's 1979 album *Survival*, in which he calls for Pan-African solidarity. At the time of its release, *Survival* was censored by the apartheid government of South Africa.

People Have the Power 1988, Patti Smith
*The power to dream / to rule
to wrestle the world from fools
it's decreed the people rule
it's decreed the people rule.*

Highly influential American singer-songwriter, poet and artist Patti Smith has performed *People Have the Power* at many public political events and campaign rallies, including those opposing the Iraq War and protests that called for the impeachment of George W. Bush.

Corruption 1989, Thomas Mapfumo
Zimbabwean musician Thomas Mapfumo coined the term 'chimurenga music' ('chimurenga' being the Shona word for struggle), which has come to be a popular term used to describe a musical genre which promotes human rights, political dignity and social justice. *Corruption*, which was banned from airplay in Zimbabwe, criticises Robert Mugabe and his government. Mapfumo was reportedly forced to flee the country in the 1990s due to harassment.

Killing in the Name 1992, Rage Against the Machine
Some of those that were forces are the same that bore crosses.

Killing in the Name makes the point that some members of the US police force were, and possibly still are, members of the Ku Klux Klan.

Rich Man's War 2005, Steve Earle
Earle is a contemporary American singer-songwriter and political activist. As a young man he played in coffee houses alongside anti-Vietnam War campaigners. These experiences went on to shape his own song writing, and he continues to write explicitly political songs, actively campaigning against the war in Iraq and the death penalty.

Related events

THE OFFICE OF USEFUL ART

JANUARY 2014

POLITICAL COMMITMENT IN WORLD CINEMA

FREE (with an exhibition ticket to *Art Turning Left*)

Advanced booking is recommended

Political Commitment to World Cinema is a series of talks and film screenings delivered by lecturers in Film Studies at University of Liverpool about politically engaged films from around the world.

FILM SCREENING: *SPIRIT OF THE BEEHIVE* 1973

Friday 10 January 2014

14.00 - 16.00

First in this series is *Spirit of the Beehive* (Víctor Erice, 1973) presented by Dr Tom Whittaker, Lecturer in Film Studies and Hispanic Studies from the University of Liverpool. This controversial Spanish film was made during the last years of the Franco regime, and was the first to address the social reality of Spain after the Civil War. The film centres on Ana, a young girl, who on discovering a fugitive Republican soldier, believes him to be the spirit of Frankenstein.

FILM SCREENING: *JONAS QUI AURA 25 ANS DANS L'AN 2000* 1975

Wednesday 15 January 2014

14.00 – 16.00

Second in this series is *Jonas qui aura 25 ans dans l'an 2000* (Ian Tanner, 1975) presented by Dr Alison Smith, Lecturer in Film Studies and French from The University of Liverpool. A group of survivors of the social and political turmoil of May 1968 in France, determined one way or another to keep the flame alive, cope with their problematic ideals and their relationships and try to start an alternative community. This 'political comedy' represents one of the most accessible and original fruits of the collaboration between Swiss director Tanner and British writer John Berger.

FILM SCREENING: *CORAZÓN DEL TIEMPO (HEART OF TIME)* 2009

Thursday 16 January 2014

14.00 – 16.00

Third in this series is *Corazón del tiempo (Heart of Time)* (Alberto Cortés, 2009) presented by Dr Niamh Thornton, Senior Lecturer in Hispanic Studies and Film Studies from the University of Liverpool. *Corazón del tiempo (Heart of Time)* is set in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas amidst the low-level war that has been ongoing since 1994. This heartwarming love story tells of the everyday difficulties and tensions that arise when living in a terrain beset by conflict

FILM SCREENING: *BICYCLE THIEVES* 1948

Wednesday 22 January 2014

14.00 – 16.00

Fourth in this series is *Bicycle Thieves* (Vittorio de Sica, 1948) presented by Dr Tiago de Luca, Lecturer in World Cinema, from the University of Liverpool. Directed by Vittorio de Sica and written by Cesare Zavattini, *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) stands as a cornerstone of a social realist tradition in world cinema. Its deceptively simple story of a man in search of his bicycle through the streets of a war-ravaged Rome captures the essence of its time and remains a poignant cinematic plea for social equality.

For more information about this event and to book please visit www.tate.org.uk/liverpool

FEBRUARY 2014

REMODELLING DISPARITY: A COLLECTIVE REMODELLING DROP IN WORKSHOP

Saturday 1 February 2014

13.30–16.30

FREE (with an exhibition ticket to *Art Turning Left*)

Visitors are invited to join local artist Allie Rutherford in *The Office of Useful Art* for a collective remodelling drop-in workshop. In response to *Art Turning Left*, participants will use simple materials to create 3D models to show current global disparities considering inequalities in wealth, resource consumption and labour-force. Participants will work together to discuss, debate and build new models of re-distribution.

For further information and updates on public events in *The Office of Useful Art* please visit:

www.tate.org.uk/liverpool

FURTHER ADULT EVENTS

CURATOR-LED GUIDED TOUR: FRANCESCO MANACORDA

Thursday 23 January 2014

15.00 – 16.00

£13 (Concessions £11) price includes exhibition admission and guided tour

Visitors are invited to join Francesco Manacorda, Artistic Director, for a guided tour of *Art Turning Left*, the first exhibition to examine how the production and reception of art has been influenced by left-wing values. During the tour there will be an opportunity for visitors to take part in a workshop led by Francesco.

Participants will be encouraged to consider the questions raised by the exhibition; do we need to know who makes art? Does participation deliver equality? Are there ways to distribute art differently?

Visitors are recommended to visit the exhibition prior to the start of the talk. Advanced booking is recommended.

Visitor Information

Address

Tate Liverpool, Albert Dock, Liverpool Waterfront, Liverpool, L3 4BB

Public information and booking: 0151 702 7400

Textphone: 18801 7027400

Tate online

Visit www.tate.org.uk
@tateliverpool

Opening hours

Tate Liverpool is open seven days a week, 10.00-17.00. Last entry to *Art Turning Left* is 16.00.

Admission

There is a charge for special exhibitions. Tickets for *Art Turning Left* are priced at £8 (£6 concessions). To book your tickets in advance book online at www.tate.org.uk/tickets, call 0151 702 7400 (booking fee applies) or book in person at any Tate gallery.

Shop

Catalogues, books, posters, cards and gifts; open daily 10.00-17.00
www.tate.org.uk/shop or call 0151 702 7575

Café

Open daily 10.00-17.00, call 0151 702 7581

Travel

Bicycle: bicycle racks are located in Mermaid Courtyard, adjacent to Tate Liverpool. For information about cycling in Merseyside call 0151 330 1290 or visit www.letstravelwise.org

Bus: the nearest bus station is Liverpool One Bus Station.

Train: the nearest mainline train station is Liverpool Lime Street. Transfer to Merseyrail Station, James Street for a shorter onward journey.

Car: Follow the brown tourist signs to 'Albert Dock'. There is a multi-storey car park at Kings Dock and Liverpool One. Pay and Display parking for Blue Badge holders is available at Albert Dock.

Air: Fly to Liverpool John Lennon airport from a number of European destinations. There is a regular bus service from the airport to the city centre, alternatively take a 20-minute taxi journey to the gallery.

For more information and help to plan your journey by public transport, call Traveline on 0871 200 22 33 or visit www.merseytravel.gov.uk

Tate Members

Tate Members enjoy free unlimited entry to exhibitions at all four Tate galleries as well as access to exclusive Members' rooms at Tate Modern and Tate Britain, priority booking for exhibitions, TATE ETC. magazine and a bi-monthly guide to what's on, sent throughout the year. Individual membership starts from £62. For more information visit www.tate.org.uk/members.

Appendix 4.b.

Art Turning Left Wall Texts

ART TURNING LEFT: User Guide

Three core values common to all left-wing ideologies are a belief in the equality of all people, a quest for social progress often linked to economic systems, and the conviction that working together is better than competing individually. Throughout modern history artists have engaged with these values, frequently putting their work at the service of political causes to try and change the way society is run. These values have also affected the way that artists have made their work.

Art Turning Left is an exhibition that is designed to be used, providing visitors with questions and various possible answers. It raises issues such as 'How can art be distributed differently?' and 'Does participation delivery equality?', problems that artists have attempted to resolve through their production processes. The questions suggest enquiries around works made at different times and places which offer alternative and diverse solutions. Instead of focusing on the subject matter of the finished artwork or the artist's success in resolving the question, the emphasis is on the process of making the art. The questions have no definitive answers, and you are invited to reflect upon them through the artworks and their production to make both visual and political judgements.

As part of this collective enquiry, the Office of Useful Art is operating within the exhibition. Hosting a variety of activities that broadly explore the notion of whether art is useful, it offers a space for debate and exchange on the questions raised and the significance of changes that artists have brought to their practice.

Individual rooms

Can Art Affect Everyone?

The principle of equality implies that if there is a value to art, it should be made available to everyone. When trying to convey a message through art, artists have considered new mediums and ways of displaying their work to engage with the broadest possible public, often aiming to reach people who may not visit galleries or museums.

This raises further questions about *how* artworks communicate with people. Artists have experimented with new forms of art to actively engage the viewer, from optical effects to theatrical strategies. Rather than producing art which relies for its appreciation on expert knowledge, some artists have conceived forms that can be universally understood so as to reach all people, regardless of their social background or education.

Do We Need To Know Who Makes Art?

The idea of the artist as an individual genius with a unique talent has dominated the history of art. However, this establishes a hierarchy which not only gives some people higher status than others, but also ignores the benefit of working collectively. Artists have responded to this problem by working in groups, using methods that make it impossible to identify the individual contribution, or by keeping their individual identities a secret.

The importance of the individual artist is underlined by the artist's signature, the symbolic gesture that gives a work significant monetary value in the art market. But how can one separate the value of the art object, whether monetary or otherwise, from the identity of the artist – what value would a painting by Picasso have if we didn't know who painted it? Is the identity of the artist more important than the artwork itself?

How Can Art Infiltrate Everyday Life?

Breaking down the boundaries between artistic practice and daily living provides an opportunity to experience art in everyday settings outside of the museum or gallery, disrupting the idea of art as something that is only for the elite. It also suggests that art can function in society as a tool to be used in specific ways, from clothing design to alternative therapies, and that it should not be kept in a separate sphere of experience.

Bringing art closer to normal life can result in artists blurring the line between their art practice and their other activities. This raises further questions about the extent to

which artistic practice can be embedded in life, and whether everyone can incorporate artistic practice in the way they think, behave and live.

Does Participation Deliver Equality?

The degree of public participation in art ranges from interaction within a framework established by the artist, such as selecting a song from Ruth Ewan's *A Jukebox of People Trying to Change the World*, to works such as David Medalla's *A Stitch in Time*, in which the realisation of the work is dependent on the public's involvement, although the manner in which they participate has been pre-defined. How much does an audience participate in any given situation?

Participation can also be part of the early stages of art-making, when artists collaborate with the public on an equal level to create and develop artworks, or recognise the artistic value of public actions that exist independently of the art world. Within the range of participative practices there is a question over how the will to operate more equally has shaped different positions, and whether participation really does indicate equality between the artist and the public.

Can Pursuing Equality Change How Art Is Made?

Beyond public participation with artworks, artists have investigated how to create equality through the way that art is made. William Morris structured the production of his iconic fabrics to counteract the alienation many workers felt following the industrial revolution, offering creative labour that connected them closely to their work. Similar practices have involved focusing on the labour of an individual to emphasise the capacity all people have for creativity.

One major shift in art-making inspired by the quest for equality is the change in who makes art. From the *Workers' Pictorial Newspaper* to the Huxian peasants, throughout the twentieth century access to art-making has broadened to include non-professionals. These practices show the value not only of the individual workers, but also their collective ability to offer new perspectives.

How Can Art Speak With A Collective Voice?

Specific methodologies have been used by artists to represent groups of people, often including themselves. Scientific practices frequently provide a basis for these methodologies, from the colour theories that the neo-impressionists used to create a cohesive visual identity, to the anthropological reportage implemented by the Mass Observation movement to represent whole swathes of society. Using a scientific method makes a style repeatable and open to everyone as well as prioritising the representation of a collective over individual voices.

The use of existing newspaper photographs and printed matter to construct composite works offers a similar sense of objectivity. As the material is factual, it gives the impression of an impartial reflection of a particular group of people, rather than an individual perspective.

Are There Ways To Distribute Art Differently?

Frustrated at the elitist capitalist system that offers a reductive notion of the value of art, artists have sought to undermine the existing art market by finding alternative ways to distribute their art, from postal subscription to selling paintings by the metre. Different economic systems have been subverted, with artists embedding work within the circulation of money, or manipulating the contemporary art market to fund openly accessible online platforms.

The use of repetition has proven important, as the value of a work is often closely connected with its uniqueness. As print-making evolved, artists began to sacrifice the more lucrative unique art object to produce multiple copies of the same image, placing more importance on the work being seen by many people than on its monetary value. This has also led artists to adopt the newspaper as a format, often produced to be given away for free.

Art Turning Left Comments Summary (8 November 2013 – 2 February 2014)

| November | December | January | February | Total |
|---|--|--|--|------------|
| 21 Positive | 42 Positive | 43 Positive | 62 Positive | 168 |
| 19 exhibition 2 inspired to visit by the Today programme | 41 exhibition 1 interpretation | 34 exhibition 6 contemporary relevance 2 "Pay What You Can Afford" Weekend 1 Medalla work | 62 engaged with Medalla stitching | |
| 18 Negative | 49 Negative | 54 Negative | 6 Negative | 127 |
| 10 ticket price 3 did not meet expectations 2 disagreed with some aspects 1 an artwork not highlighted 1 projector flashing too quickly 1 cracks in the exhibition walls | 12 inaccessible/foreign language 7 ticket price 5 projector flashing too quickly 5 did not meet expectations 4 artwork 3 lack of coherence 3 interpretation errors 2 volume of works 1 confusing photography messages 1 photography rule is hypocritical 1 too much to read 1 confusing layout 1 artwork poorly presented 1 booklets poorly presented 1 did not appreciate being asked to buy a catalogue 1 lighting too dark 1 image not in the catalogue 1 gift aid as an additional cost | 14 did not meet expectations 12 inaccessible/foreign language 12 ticket price 5 volume of works 3 seating 2 confusing photography messages 2 labels needed more information 1 photography rule is hypocritical 1 women under-represented ticket price 1 interpretation error 1 too much to read | 2 did not meet expectations 2 inaccessible/foreign language 1 ticket price 1 exhibition irony/tate enterprises zero hour contracts | |
| 3 Neutral | 3 Neutral | 3 Neutral | 0 Neutral | 9 |
| 2 unsure of their opinion 1 enjoyed the catalogue, found the exhibition disappointing by comparison | 1 disappointed by no photography but understood 1 shame there are not more visitors 1 odd label location | 1 unsure of their opinion 1 thought-provoking but white male bias 1 disappointed by no photography | | |
| 0 Suggestions | 3 Suggestions | 3 Suggestions | 0 Suggestions | 6 |
| | 2 provide foreign language translations 1 encourage working class to visit exhibitions | 1 more interactivity 1 comments book 1 clearer signage for touch/don't touch | | |

Appendix 5.b.

Press Coverage

Art Turning Left: How values changed making 1789-2013

8 November 2013 – 2 February 2014

25 July 2013

[Art Media Agency](#) and [Blouin Art Info](#) previewed the exhibition

15 August 2013

[Group Leisure](#) previewed the exhibition

22 August 2013

[The Double Negative](#) featured the exhibition in the article 'Opening Now: 10 Essential Exhibitions'

[Museums Association](#) featured the exhibition in the article about museums conference in Liverpool

[Artlyst](#) featured the exhibition in the article 'Art and Left Wing Values Explored In New Tate Liverpool Exhibition'

29 August 2013

Art Quarterly magazine previewed the exhibition

3 September 2013

RA magazine previewed the exhibition in 'Art Around The Nation'

Tate Etc magazine featured an article about the exhibition

Group Travel Organisers magazine featured the exhibition in its guide to upcoming exhibitions

[We Are OCA](#) featured the exhibition in an article about a study visit to see the exhibition

12 September 2013

Group Leisure magazine previewed the exhibition

19 September 2013

[Hyperallergic](#) mentioned the exhibition in the article 'Museum shows to see in the Fall of 2013'

Spanish publishing company [Grupo Joly](#) mentioned Art Turning Left in the article 'Rafael Ortiz Gallery opens an exhibition space in Madrid'

26 September 2013

[Creative Tourist](#) mentioned the exhibition in the article 'In pictures The Art of Protest'

[Culture 24](#) mentioned the exhibition in the article 'The best UK art exhibitions to see outside London during autumn 2013'

10 October 2013

Pukkar magazine featured a competition to win tickets to the exhibition

Living Edge magazine mentioned the David Jacques talk about the history of British Trade Union Banners

17 October 2013

The Guardian listed the exhibition in 'Book Now' section

[Musuems Association](#) featured the exhibition in the article 'What's on in the city during Liverpool 2013'

24 October 2013

The Times Saturday Review listed the exhibition in its 'Book now' section

[Russian Art and Culture](#) featured an article about the exhibition

[Chester and Flintshire Chronicle](#) featured the article 'Win a family day out and overnight stay at Albert Dock' with a chance to win *Art Turning Left* exhibition tickets

[Champion news](#) online featured the article 'Win a family treat at the Albert Dock' highlighting half-term family activity 'Big Draw: Cartoon Constellations' and a chance to win *Art Turning Left* exhibition tickets

31 October 2013

The Times Saturday Review listed the exhibition in its 'Book now' section

Apollo magazine listed the exhibition in 'Agenda Apollo's highlights for November'

[Culture 24](#) listed the exhibition in the article 'Culture 24/7: The top art exhibitions to see around the UK in November 2013'

[Liverpool Live](#) mentioned the exhibition online in 'Coming Up: November exhibitions at Tate Liverpool'

7 November 2013

Previews

Previews of the exhibition ran in Art Review, Musuems Journal, Morning Star and [The Double Negative](#)

Features

[The Independent magazine](#) and online featured the exhibition in the article 'Left to their own devices: New Liverpool exhibition examines effect of socialism on art' and also features an online gallery

Jonathan Jones at [The Guardian](#) mentioned the exhibition on The Guardian blog 'The revolution will not be aestheticised: the top rightwing artists'

[Liverpool Echo](#) featured an article about the exhibition 'Art for all' and also mentioned the exhibition in '[What's on in Liverpool this week](#)'

[Liverpool Post](#) featured an article about the exhibition and an interview with assistant curator Eleanor Clayton

Listings

[The Guardian](#) listed the exhibition as 'exhibition of the week' in 'Art Weekly'

The Times Saturday Review listed the exhibition as 'top pick' in 'What's on critics' choice'

The Independent Arts & Books listed the exhibition in 'opening this week'

The Independent Radar listed the exhibition in 'opening this week'

The Sunday Telegraph listed the exhibition as 'hot ticket' in 'Where to go, what to see'.

Review

Adrian Searle reviewed the exhibition for [The Guardian](#)

14 November 2013

Broadcast

Eleanor Clayton was on this morning's [Radio 4 Today programme](#) talking about the exhibition

Previews

Art Newspaper previewed the exhibition

[Apollo magazine](#) previewed the exhibition and included an interview with Eleanor Clayton

Features

[The Guardian](#) featured an online gallery of images in the exhibition

Listings

The Guardian Guide featured the exhibition

The Times Saturday Review listed the exhibition as 'top pick' in 'What's on critics' choice'

Shortlist Magazine featured the exhibition in 'To-Do List'

[The Skinny](#) listed the exhibition in 'Top Ten events North West 7-14 Nov'

Reviews

Alastair Smart reviewed the exhibition for the Sunday Telegraph

Laura Cumming reviewed the exhibition for the Observer

[Double Negative](#) reviewed the exhibition

21 November 2013

Reviews

Adrian Hamilton from [The Independent](#) featured a positive review of the exhibition

Catherine Jones from Liverpool Echo featured a positive review of the exhibition

Features

[The Calvert Journal](#) featured a news story about the exhibition

[We Heart: Lifestyle and Design](#) magazine featured an article about the exhibition

International

Croatian daily newspaper [Novilist](#) featured an article about the exhibition

Listings

[Grazia Daily](#) magazine listed the exhibition in the article '5 things to do this weekend'

Blogs

Francesco Manacorda's blog '[Five Key works from Art Turning Left](#)' was featured on Tate website.

28 November 2013

Reviews

Mike Quille from [Morning Star](#) newspaper gave the exhibition a 4 star review

[Creative Tourist](#) featured a review of the exhibition and was featured in their [exhibitions on now](#) guide

[Confused Guff](#) blog reviewed the exhibition.

Stories/Competitions

[Champion news](#) online featured a news story about the exhibition

Warrington Guardian ran a 'Letter to Santa' competition with one of the prizes being family tickets to see *Art Turning Left*.

Listings

The Guardian Guide listed the exhibition as 'pick of the week'

The Independent Radar featured the exhibition in 'Visual Arts'

The Independent i featured the exhibition in 'visual arts' section.

5 December 2013

Reviews

Labour Briefing magazine featured a review of the exhibition

[Feeling Listless](#) reviewed the exhibition

Features

Socialist Review featured the exhibition and mentioned in particular Maximilien Luce's *L'aciérie* 1895

Red Pepper magazine featured an article about the exhibition and an interview with Francesco Manacorda

Stories

Crosby & Litherland and Bootle Champion newspapers featured a news story about the exhibition

International

Finnish blog [Lily](#) featured the exhibition in the article 'looking to the left'

Listings

The Independent Radar listed the exhibition as 'exhibition of the week' and The Guardian Guide listed the exhibition as 'pick of the week'

Blogs

Emma Palmer's blog ['Can music fight the power? Try our protest song playlist'](#) was featured on Tate Website.

12 December 2013

Reviews

Architects' Journal positively reviewed the exhibition

[Aesthetica Blog](#) and [Corridor 8](#) also reviewed the exhibition

Listings

The Times Saturday Review listed the exhibition in 'What's on critics' choice' and The Guardian Guide listed the exhibition as 'Pick of the week'

Art Quarterly listed the exhibition in 'Around the Country' and The Pass magazine listed the exhibition in its exhibitions guide

Blogs

Novelist Hari Kunzru's blog post ['Turn left for the revolution'](#) was featured on Tate website.

19 December 2013

Reviews

[World Socialist Website](#) featured a review about the exhibition

Stories

[Morning Star](#) highlighted the exhibition as "the most thoughtfully curated exhibition in the last 12 months" in 'Visual arts 2013 round-up'

Listings

The Independent Radar listed the exhibition in 'now playing: visual arts'.

3 January 2014

Reviews

Jackdaw magazine reviewed the exhibition

Stories

Big Issue in the North featured a news story and interview with Martha Rosler about her work *If You Lived Here...1989*

Listings

[The Observer](#) New Review listed the exhibition as 'turkey of the year'.

6 January 2014

Features

[The Independent](#) Radar featured Jaques-Louis David's *The Death of Marat* 1793 currently on display at Tate Liverpool in 'Great Works' by Michael Glover

Apollo magazine featured the exhibition in the article 'What's left?'

Listings

Guardian Guide listed the upcoming Film Screenings in *The Office of Useful Art*

The Times Saturday Review featured the exhibition in visual arts section of 'What's on critics' choice'.

16 January 2014

Reviews

The Times Literary Supplement and Third Way magazine reviewed the exhibition

Listings

The Times Saturday Review listed the exhibition in 'What's on critics' choice'

Stories

[University of Liverpool](#) featured a news story about the *World Cinema Film Screenings* taking place in the Office of Useful Art

Blogs

Francesco Manacorda's blog post 'Can art affect everyone?' was featured on [Tate website](#)

Appendix 6.a.

Interview with Lindsey Fryer, March 27, 2014

Lynn Wray (LW)

Lindsey Fryer (LF)

LW: How did the learning team contribute to the development and production of the exhibition?

LF: The Head of Learning meets regularly with the Artistic Director and Head of Exhibitions to discuss proposed exhibitions and make informed decisions about inclusion in the programme. The Learning team are part of the Programme group with Exhibitions curators and the Artistic Director. This forum discusses content and planning of exhibitions and learning programmes. The Learning team is part of regular cross-departmental Implementation meetings are the organisational planning tool from exhibition initiation to delivery and review with input from each department. In addition, the Learning team met with Lynn Wray to discuss the curatorial rationale, concept, themes and artists; TL's audience development and engagement priorities and corresponding learning programmes. The Head of Learning, Artistic Director Lynn Wray and the Assistant Curator worked together on the interpretation strategy, content and production. Tate Collective, TL's youth programme worked on with Artist Ruth Ewan in the co-production of a new work for the exhibition. The Head of Learning was given the lead on the creation, delivery, content and programme of the Office of Useful Art with Grizedale Arts and Liverpool School of Art & Design. The OUA was embedded with in the exhibition as a 'classroom' for public engagement in the ideas of the uses of art. It was open and accessible and operated as a teaching and learning resource for a range of student groups, adults and young people. Organised public events happened in the space directly related to the exhibition themes and the Office of Useful Art itself and the space was offered to a wide range of self organised groups to use as a resource for their own needs such as meetings, workshops and a social space.

LW: What do you think was particularly successful about the exhibition in terms of public engagement and could anything have been improved in hindsight?

LF: The Office of Useful Art worked really well as a 'hub' for discussion about the whole exhibition. The remnants of public and students sessions were displayed in the Office for the public to read and we aimed to have a person in the space at all times to talk with people, provide information, discuss the OUA and the exhibition as a whole. From our experience the questions posed within the exhibition sections often left visitors wanting more discussion or information. The Visitor Experience Assistants in the gallery are there for this purpose but cannot talk to everyone. The catalogue was freely available throughout the gallery to help amplify the ideas but in hindsight I would have taken each question that formed the interpretative sections as a starting point

for a series of public debates that we could have filmed and shown in the gallery and online throughout the period of the show and as a legacy. The use of social media around these questions could have been used more constructively.

LW: I think the idea of a public debate around each question, which would then be shown in gallery/online is a fantastic idea and would have greatly helped people think about the key themes without pushing forward ideas solely from the perspective of the gallery. The idea of having and using debate fits well with the 'agonist' approach that Chantal Mouffe proposes, in which she stresses the importance of art institutions as alternative spaces for polemic political debate as an alternative to the idea of consensus parliamentary politics (see <http://truthisconcrete.org/texts/?p=19> for example). Do you think the gallery, as a public funded institution, can play a political role in this way and if so is this desirable?

LF: I think that publicly funded galleries can provide an inclusive alternative environment for debate, but shouldn't take a party political position on any issue. Ideological and philosophical ideas can be debated in the gallery environment specifically related to artistic concerns and practices but also examining the contexts that art is conceived, made, collected, shown and interpreted in. This approach is used in interpretation and learning practices in order to engage visitors with ideas but also to provide opportunities for dialogue and contextual information to create a deeper understanding.

LW: How effective do you think the strategies employed to communicate the central concept were. E.g. Do you think they succeeded in focussing the viewer's attention on the way in which political values influenced the processes of production and distribution rather than the subject matter of the work?

LF: The groupings and overlaps of ideas and art works throughout the show did, I feel privilege the concept of the show in terms and values, production and distribution. The art works chosen, the design of the exhibition, the interpretation, learning and marketing strategies aimed to make this explicit. This was clearly understood by some visitors. Many thought the exhibition was absorbing, relevant and illuminating - the best they had ever seen but this view was countered by as many visitors saying that there was too much work, incoherent concept, inaccessible interpretation, not for people with little art knowledge, elitist - contrary to concept of the show. This is reflected in 4.4.

LW: I felt that the balance was very heavily weighted towards final artworks rather than artistic production and process and thus more could have been done in both the selection and presentation of works/objects to focus on the 'making' and 'distribution' of work. Do you think it is important that in Tate exhibitions the majority of objects on display are final works of art by established professional artists? Are there any specific barriers to focusing more on processes/production and supplementary/ documentary material or to featuring work made by non-professionals?

LF: Its a very interesting question and I personally have no issue with revealing and debating artistic process and production. Where this approach is taken - sketch books/writings/personal artefacts etc. visitors are highly engaged. There is no policy on showing only finished art works by professional artists. However, as we hold the National Collection and our remit is to show this to as wide an audience as possible. But we also have a vast archive of material that can also be shown. In terms of loans in we also may have access to other material that could reveal process and production. Therefore, its a curatorial decision. Showing work made by 'non-professionals' is also a very interesting question and as you know there are many artists who work with non-professionals in the process and production of their work and we have shown many of these works in Collection displays and special exhibitions over the years *The Fifth Floor: Ideas Taking Space* specifically aimed to show works that were co-operative, co-produced, collaborative. Showing non-professional work in the gallery outwith these contexts only happens through working with artists in a Learning context in non gallery spaces . The exception to this is when it is a temporary performance or intervention conceived as part of a public programme - rather than curatorially conceived.

LW: Were there any specific challenges in trying to develop the interpretation material for this exhibition?

LF: Trying to convey the enormous and complex series of ideas, some of which are very new to visitors is always a challenge. Getting the balance between clear accessible information that relate ideas and art works and the danger of filling the gallery with text is a consistent problem. Allowing for visitors new to concepts. artists themes is essential - we cannot assume what people know or don't know. Terminology/ academic language/lack of translations were cited by visitors as problematic. Not everyone responds to text, or a conversational approach or a short film. There needs to be a combination that is carefully curated understanding different needs and learning styles, giving enough accessible background information for visitors to explore. The strategy of asking questions in conversational language seems does not seem to have alleviated this issues of inaccessibility for many people. It is clear that it did work in moving visitors out of their comfort zone as passive receivers of information or someone else's interpretation of ideas and art works. We expected visitors to feel able to use the questions as starting point for investigating the concept of the exhibition and art works for themselves and to provoke discussions in the gallery and beyond. This did happen to a degree but as many visitors who commented felt they needed more information and knowledge by which to navigate the concept of the show and the art works.

LW: I completely agree that there was a strong need for more information about the works that illuminated why they actually related to the questions each section posed. It was not necessarily ever going to be possible to 'read' the art works in themselves – without supporting material, interpretative texts etc – in

this way but in the end there was not much supporting material or interpretation available. As you know there was a consistent dialogue throughout the build up to the exhibition around the tensions between the need for information, the problem of information fatigue and a desire not to be too didactic, which was perhaps never fully resolved. Although I understand these competing pressures, I do feel that providing information can give people more intellectual agency rather than restrict it particularly if free thinking is not closed down by presenting ideas as facts.

Could the exhibition texts and captions have been more experimental for this particular exhibition? In hindsight, I feel that it might have been interesting, for example, to be more polemical in the texts and to write them as if they were authored texts, opinions and ideas written by individuals rather than neutral statements of fact presented by the institution. Is there much freedom/flexibility to develop alternative approaches to the textual information in the gallery for specific exhibitions or is it necessary to keep to a specific format governed by the Tate brand?

LF: There is freedom to develop alternative approaches to textual information but this needs to be agreed as early as possible with a clear rationale, strategy and agreement about who is responsible. Interpretation at TL falls between three departments with accompanying tensions. Interpretation texts are often not an early priority for curatorial staff and often get left until the last minute. Moving forward we now have a new post Content Editor who we are expecting to be able to innovate across the gallery ensuring that visitor experience is at the core of the process, introducing visitor engagement in the ideas and the writing of interpretation - specifically the collection displays. The difficulty is writing 'authored' texts is one we constantly struggle with, whether real or 'fictional'. It's something that we will continue to discuss and test out.

LW: I remember in the interpretation meetings discussing whether it was possible to use the word 'alienation' in the exhibition texts and it was felt that this would be too challenging to the audience. It certainly seems from the visitor comments, as you predicted, that some of the less familiar/academic terminology employed in the text was a barrier to their understanding and enjoyment of the exhibition. However, where a concept such as 'alienation' is so key to understanding why some of the artists featured produced and distributed their work it also seems essential to introduce this to an audience rather than close off one avenue of understanding art. Marx managed to introduce the concept of alienation to millions of people (and especially working class people/people without a formal education) across the globe by appealing to how it related to their everyday lived experience, so is the challenge then in communicating through the exhibition medium itself? Do you think that some concepts are simply too difficult to communicate through the exhibition form? Or can you cite any examples from previous/other exhibitions where the exhibitions/learning teams have found interesting or successful means of introducing complex ideas without resorting to long textual explanations?

LF: I don't think that any idea or term is too difficult for the public or the exhibition medium to incorporate. If I remember using the word 'alienation' in the context that it was proposed was an issue. Its a perennial problem as you say. In my view it isn't the term or the word that's the problem but how we are using it and why in any given context.

LW: What was the intended purpose of including the Office of Useful Art and how do you think this contributed to the exhibition in practice?

LF: The OUA was included in the exhibition to engage the public in the current and historical arguments that relate to how artistic practices are examining the concepts of the uses of art in society. This provided a context to examine and discuss how and why art is made, used, discussed, learnt about, who makes it, who participates/collaborates/co-creates it, how it is valued and by whom and why. In part it aimed to create a space where people felt able to spend time on their own or with others thinking, reading, talking, making, teaching and learning. This first iteration in Liverpool was testing out how these ideas can be examined within a public context with a range of public engagement activity - some of which directly tackled the concepts and questions within the show.

LW: OUA certainly seemed to provide an interesting and useful space to use as a learning hub in the exhibition for student and community groups. However, I felt when I visited the gallery that some visitors felt very unsure of how to interact with the Office of Useful Art, whether they were allowed to enter and what the purpose of the space was but seemed afraid to ask. How do you think these kind of barriers to engagement with such spaces could be overcome?

LF: The OUA really operated as a hybrid I feel - somewhere between an art work and a public space for dialogue. Embedding such a space in a gallery context that was sometimes inhabited and sometimes not was problematic and inevitably will produce some uncertainty in some visitors. We did aim to have someone in the space at all times to welcome people and to explain the function and this could have worked better. It was meant to be slightly bigger and may have afforded us more space to welcome observers if something was going on in the space. Interpretation spaces/rooms where there are reading materials, images, films, interactives don't usually have these barriers - quite the opposite, so it was interesting to observe different behaviours in such a space where they maybe felt unsure about the function. The idea behind it being a 'classroom' aesthetic might have contributed to how people felt about the space.

Appendix 6.b.

Interview with Jemima Pyne, March 17, 2014

Lynn Wray (LW)

Jemima Pyne (JP)

LW: Have the visitor figures reached the targets expected what do you think may have contributed to why the exhibition did/ did not reach these targets?

JP: No, the visitor figure didn't reach the overall target set. It's disappointing that we didn't but our target setting isn't hugely sophisticated and we're often wide of the mark so not unusual. *Art Turning Left* had a target of 14700 and we achieved 8159, that's more than *Tracing the Century* which was in the same slot the year before but *Alice in Wonderland* achieved c25000 in the same slot. Group, thematic shows are accepted as more difficult to sell to an audience than monographic shows and ATL proved a complex concept to sell to the wider audience. We worked hard to try to get 14700 people through the show but it's not a failure that we didn't achieve it.

LW: How do you evaluate the success of an exhibition such as 'Art Turning Left'?

JP: Personally I'd look at a range of indicators including visitor numbers, range of press coverage, take up of learning programmes and visitor feedback to get a measure of the impact the show had made. I'd also think about how we'd worked together at TL to deliver the show.

LW: Has audience feedback been positive or negative on the whole? Can you give some examples of the type of comments received?

JP: I've attached a summary of the visitor comments that's been pulled together by the VE team. They've been characterised as positive, negative, neutral and suggestions as this helps us understand public reaction. The proportions of positive to negative are similar to other shows of this level of popularity - generally shows with this sort of level of visitor number and thematic receive similar number of negative and positive comments. The summer so-called 'blockbuster' shows eg Chagall tend to have a higher proportion of very positive comments.

LW: How effective was the 'pay what you can afford' pricing strategy in terms of attracting a larger and more diverse audience to the exhibition?

It worked very well! For the past few years we've experimented with a 'winter sale' to boost visits to the special exhibition in January. The gallery is at it's quietest around the 2nd weekend of the year when the weather and lack of disposable income meant visitors needed to be lured in. Previously we've priced all exhibition tickets at £1 and promoted the weekend on social media with some supporting press. We hit upon the pwyca idea because it chimed with themes in the exhibition, gave the weekend a slightly different twist and could also embrace activities within

the Office of Useful Art, shop and cafe. Visitors could chose how much to pay for exhibition entry (paying nothing was an option), the shop had a special selection of stock that buyers could decide prices and the shop hosted the Grizedale Honesty Shop. As usual we only started promoting the weekend on the Monday before and heavily used our social media and other online channels.

We had the busiest weekend in the gallery since October, and busiest weekend of the exhibition. Interestingly some visitors paid more than the standard ticket price, a few paid very little but the most popular price was £5, our standard concession. The shop had a very successful weekend and shifted lots of written off stock. Public reaction was good and staff enjoyed working during the weekend. Francesco is keen that we repeat the exercise with Keywords.

LW: Did the supplement to the exhibition sell as well as expected?

JP: Yes, it sold better at Tate Liverpool than we'd expected. We'd set a target for sales of 600 copies, in the end between the shop and the front desk we sold 820. All the more impressive as we had a lower visitor figure than anticipated. However because the supplement didn't have a spine we weren't able to distribute it with Tate Publishing, they therefore only took 200 copies for sale in the shops in London. Sales at the ticket desk were particularly positive - a very pleasant surprise as generally we've struggled to sell anything other than tickets at this point! Although a more modest publication than those previously produced the cost of illustrations was high.

Appendix 6.c.

Interview with Francesco Manacorda, July 23, 2014

Lynn Wray (LW)

Francesco Manacorda (FM)

LW: What do you think was particularly successful about the exhibition and the curatorial strategy?

FM: I think for me it was really successful to try and organise this large topic around values but then experimenting with the questions within them. So I would say that it was hugely successful although not all of the audience would agree with me. It was split 50/50, some people loved it, some people hated it. But it was successful as an experimentation, and particularly as a way of breaking down the normal conventions of exhibition-making which are normally linear narratives (this happens and then this happens. Whilst it was very interesting to do that, go against the principles of coherence and contextual proximity that normally exhibitions use. And in that sense, even if people hated it, this was a sign that we were on to something in relation to how we were talking to the audience about the project. I think that the structure we ended up coming up with worked well. I think it allowed us to really make some striking and even puzzling juxtapositions. I think the nature of questioning was in the spirit of the works we exhibited, so essentially trying to position the means of production of art historical knowledge in a different kind of setting. This is something I am obsessed with in general for Tate in the future. How do we turn an exhibition from functioning like a television programme to instead function more like Wikipedia? How do we get exhibitions to, instead of transmitting knowledge, function instead as a repository of knowledge or a means of writing knowledge? This was for me the most successful part.

Another successful thing was something that was reported to me by Anna Cutler, the Director for Learning at Tate. Though not everyone was understanding it, she found that what we trying to do was to really break down the conventions of learning. Rather than producing mental processes that were inductive (from the multitude you reduce to one), which is what exhibitions normally do (for example, Colour Chart where you bring a multitude of different artists together around one umbrella) we were proceeding the other way round. We were being deductive. So from the one, the left, we went onto ask a series of more fragmented, contradictory questions, that in turn raised more questions. She was saying that no doubt that people were quite puzzled by that as it required much more engagement, but that that is normally how learning operates. From one element you fragment and then break it down. The exhibition is normally meant to consolidate. But for her that this exhibition did not try and do this was the most exciting thing. She feels that that is the future of how museums should work.

LW: In that respect then, would there be a way —once the visitor left —if they had more questions to allow them to follow up and keep the questions alive within the institution?

FM: The difficulty is this is a huge amount of work. Who would monitor this process? Who would edit it? This is what I was aiming to achieve with the Office for Useful Art, but I think we managed to do this better with the framework of the exhibition itself by using juxtapositions and questions in the wall texts. I was trying to create a setting in which the viewer was required to do some work. Some

refused. Some people did engage and did do work. The exhibition was tough as it required a lot of work from the viewer. Some people were happy and perfectly prepared to do it, because that's a valuable cultural experience. But I think this is more valuable if it takes place in the time and space of the exhibition itself rather than afterwards.

LW: I guess the free return visit cards available from the Office for Useful Art was one means of allowing the visitor to revisit the questions.

FM: Exactly.

LW: Is there any strategy you would take forward in the future?

FM: Yes, the idea of incongruous juxtapositions. The constellation displays are designed to do something similar and this is something I would like to keep experimenting with. In future exhibition and collection displays I would be keen to use the strategy of questions again. I think the interest in the Office for Useful Art centred on the idea of creating a framework for people to use and generate knowledge, through organised events that are hosted but not controlled by the museum. That is something I am definitely interested in carrying on doing?

LW: How successful was the supplement format, over a standard catalogue, and is this something you may take forward in other shows?

FM: Yes, the difficulty with the supplement format is that you can't really distribute it, because it doesn't really have a spine, you can't really distribute it in the normal ways, but that's the only downside we had with it. It was pretty successful in terms of sales and it meant that pretty much half of the people who visited got a copy. And Chto Dealt? are using it as a text book in their school in St Petersburg and there are some elements that I think are really interesting as a result of the research that you did for three years – the impact is probably quite big.

LW: Why did the curatorial team decide specifically to pose questions in each of the exhibition sections? I'm interested in why we switched from looking at the values themselves.

FM: It's really to realise this non, or anti-television thing, rather than broadcasting some answers it was interesting to put questions. And for me it was interesting also to consider a theme – I was quite obsessed with your idea of the Brechtian principle of distanciation — as something to explore as an exhibition principle. The idea of making incoherent rooms and creating this constant fracture in the narrative that is linear was to really essentially activate the consciousness of the viewer in the way that Brecht activates the consciousness of the spectator. In relation to the question, the idea was there would be a constant back and forth between understanding why the works are there, because they aren't necessarily placed there for a self-evident reason, and in fact, there was this element of creating work for the viewer to do themselves.

LW: What do you think the strategy, as you referred to it in the guidebook, of 'superficial incoherence', brought to the exhibition? Do you think it was effectively combined in all the different sections, or did it work better in some places than others?

FM: I think it probably worked better in some places than others; there were some sections that were more striking because of the work, because of the juxtapositions, but I think it brought this element of constant questioning and a constant necessity for the viewer to take a position, rather than just absorb a position and then say 'I agree'. But essentially there was much less guidance and people would have to figure out what the work was. We gave people the instruments to do so — not for every single work but in each section there was an extended caption. But then that extended

caption didn't tell anyone why the work was where it was, so the superficial incoherence was a bit of the distancing thing, but it was also the principle of collage – this shouldn't be here, so why is it there? And asking the visitor to provide an answer rather than telling the answer. It wasn't always as aggressive as that because sometimes it was a bit more self-evident like in the shared authorship room, the Equipo 57 was pretty self-evident why it was there right? You'd have to read the caption and then you'd understand that, but if you looked at how and why that and (the) Komar and Melamid (work) were close to each other, than that would be a question for you to figure out rather than something completely explained by the expressional apparatus.

LW: Do you think the amount of interpretation was appropriate then? Do you think people were able, from the extended captions and the individual work captions to understand the idea of the exhibition and the intention behind the work? Was it possible to encapsulate in a short amount of words the key things you might need to know about the work?

FM: I think that's necessary, already there was too much interpretation because it just requires a lot of time to read it. I think it worked fine, but I think we just should have had either a smaller show or interspersed the exhibition with at least three large installations that would just give a different pace, so that you wouldn't have 320 objects, you'd have 200 objects, and three large things. It's too demanding on the viewer as along with the 300 plus objects there is information and writing within them which you need to decode, so yes it was a bit too much.

LW: Is there anything else you would've done differently if you could curate it again?

FM: Yes, I think it's mainly that – made it smaller, because we were asking so much of the viewer and their contribution, to see probably the exhibition and be a properly conscientious viewer you needed like four hours and that was really a bit too much. And also the shift of attentions, so after the fourth hour towards the end, you really can't be bothered to exert so much attention. So that durational aspect is the thing I would've changed: smaller show or bigger single installations, three large video installations would've worked well, a sculptural thing, like things you can walk in and walk out.

LW: How effective were the strategies that we employed to focus the viewers' attention on the process of the production and distribution as opposed to the subject matter? For example, did we successfully show the making processes, which was one of the challenges we recognised as we were going along?

FM: I don't know that's really difficult, you'd have to ask the viewer. That was one of the other reasons the questions are why they were, and that's why incoherence was so important as essentially it was a way of signalling that the coherence was not in the look but in the question. So I think it was successful but it's really difficult to say.

LW: Do you think more documentation, like photographs, of the making process would have helped, like Pinot Gallizio, or would it have made more fragments?

FM: I think it would've made more fragments. In some ways it would've invalidated the radical way of showing the final end for people to work out the reasons. If we had to do that we should have done that with a selection of work which would have allowed us to do it for every single work.

LW: Ok, so with a much smaller selection of work

FM: Yes, so that you essentially aim to show the process. You could've done that with a room of Pinot Galizio and had every single picture – so a single installation – like an in focus room, then yes it

could've worked. And it would have been a nice way, to show maybe 3 or 4 works and show the process differently through films and such like. The only problem I have with that though is that so much of the work is documentation, you are asking people to look at more documentation and work out from black and white photographs what is going on.

LW: We did speak about the possibility of live-making or demonstrations of the production process within the gallery space.

FM: It would be very difficult because of insurance and conservation issues.

LW: Do you think there was any other specific challenges with curating an exhibition on political art?

FM: Not particularly, I think in some way we took a position that was extremely defensible in relation to Tate being a national institution, so being non-partisan, not taking one political side or another, we looked at how a certain political faction influenced art making, rather than showing the better validity of a certain faction over the other. So we were just trying to map this one force which has changed the way things are done and how the public is addressed.

LW: Did people question why there was a focus solely on the left?

FM: No, many people asked but not in a particularly desultory way, they'd ask rather: when are you going to do an exhibition of the right? Some people asked why the left and why is it more difficult to do the right? And the answer that I often used, was that, embedded in the idea of the left, was this constant change which is also part of how art operates. It's not that there aren't episodes where the right have had an influence on art making, there are many, but they are much less precisely articulated and engaged in this constant renovation that art goes through. The idea of progress and constant reinvention has something which is much more to do with the left objectively than the right, essentially it's something that tries to deregulate in order to keep and maintain certain things.

LW: Do you think it's important then for the art institution to be politically neutral?

FM: Not particularly, I think it's important to be politically neutral in terms of telling people what to think. It's important to profile a political element that has had a huge influence on the discipline which we (the art institution) are doing here in order to foster the appreciation of art. So I don't think that's a problem, I think it's a problem if I use my position if I say that people should vote left.

LW: There is a lot of debate in curatorial literature about using curatorial positions to further specific political objectives — though they're mainly not tied to specific political parties, they're quite often of a leftist bent.

FM: Yes, I think it depends on which institution you are speaking from. And the Tate is a national institution and it's funded by the government and it's a non-political body so there is an urgency to figure out how you deal with it. If you're in an artisanal space or say a small not for profit organisation in Germany, I don't see why not take a position if you want to.

LW: I guess major art institutions have a responsibility as public funds are involved

FM: It's not just that it's also because it's not really appropriate to do it — you can find an artist who wants to do it — but it's not appropriate in the same way it's not appropriate for the Red Cross to take sides in a war, as they are there to do something else. It's not for the Red Cross to say 'these are the bad people and these are the good people', it is just to essentially provide a service — there is a difference.

LW: Is there any other specific challenges this exhibition raised in terms of its realisation, even down to loans of work? Or things that were different from a standard exhibition?

FM: I think the difficulty was the amount of stuff and the extent of documentation in archival works like the Martha Rosler. This archive was a problem installing even just to condition check it, a conservation nightmare I think. So in that sense, that would be the biggest challenge that it raised.

LW: Do you think the title of the exhibition worked? And what were the specific reasons that *What's Left* wasn't chosen as a title in the end?

FM: I think the title worked. The main problem with *What's Left* was the double meaning — that I think could have confused people. So although there is a fascination with double meaning, it's less encouraging. It is a basic rule of marketing — it's nothing really evil, but it's important to tell people what you're doing and to try to make them want to participate in what you're doing. So I think the double meaning is always fighting a bit against that; if you are at the other end, the double meaning confuses you and you think 'what is this?' — is it an exhibition about performance and props left behind? Is it an exhibition about politics? Just with the title right. So the clarifying is basically motivated by that, but you need to be able to tell people: art turning left. Already just from the title they can decide if they want to engage or not. So I think what worked with the title is this idea that the turn in form was these ideas around change and processes and then it was clear that it was about a relationship between two things: between a field and a political idea. So in that sense, that's the reason why I thought it was better [*Art Turning Left*], of course the fascination we all have with double meaning is that art per se is a receptacle of multiple meanings, so it's nicer to have something that doesn't close down things but in fact opens them up with multiple possibilities, but when you're at the other end of not knowing what the show is about it's puzzling. Why I was so adamant, or convinced that it wouldn't work [*What's Left?*], when I was doing the interviews for this position I received the programme, with only the titles, and I had no idea what it was [*What's Left?*] until I received a press release I couldn't really understand what the exhibition would be, so it was quite important for me, from a personal experience. But then when I tried with other people — it wasn't completely impossible for other people to work it out — but at the same time I just felt that it was better to make sure that people could make that decision of I'll come or I'm not going to come.

LW: the previous director was of a similar opinion. He felt that if exhibition toured, the title wouldn't carry the same double meaning so it wouldn't function in the same way.

FM: It's funny that you can do the same joke with the right as well!

LW: Do you think any of the particular sections stood out more, or worked better than any others in relation to the questions that were posed?

FM: Well I think the first room was quite good. I think probably the participation room was quite good as well, mainly because the question was the most provocative one, and it asked the best question. Although the authorship one was a good question also.

LW: I think they were the rooms I could see the most people actively engaging with the question and talking to each other the most, whereas I think people perhaps just got a bit caught up in the individual works in the other rooms.

FM: The distribution one was a good one as well but problem was it was really, really full of work.

LW: Do you think the 'pay what you want' entrance fee weekend was successful as a strategy in the end? And did it work for Tate?

FM: Yes, it did work for Tate; it brought in a lot of people and the average payment at the end was more or less the same, maybe slightly less, but in some way mathematically it worked. And it worked in terms of creating a debate about it. And in general I find it still very, very attractive, I'm trying to find out if we can do it again because I find it a very attractive proposition that you empower the viewer that they decide what they want to pay, that you're not saying there is no ticket – there is a ticket but you can decide, so you can pay a pound, ten p, one p, whatever, but you decide according to what you think you can afford. I'm not sure it will ever happen again but I think it would be a very interesting thing to happen, I mean that as for the whole exhibition, not just a weekend – there is a ticket, it's not free, but you can decide what you pay. I overheard a lot of people at the counter saying that it was wrong that they shouldn't pay – they wanted to pay.

LW: I suppose it reflects well on the institution as well as allowing people to reflect on their principles and reflect on the value of things.